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THE

MAID OF THE HAMLET.

A TALE.

LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE

MAID OF THE HAMLET.

A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

REGINA MARIA ROCHE,

AUTHOR OF

The Children of the Abbey, Vicar of Lansdowne, Clermont, &c.

" A native grace
" Sat fair-proportion'd on her poliſh'd limbs,
" Veil'd in a ſimple robe, their beſt attire,
" Beyond the pomp of dreſs: for lovelineſs
" Needs not the foreign aid of ornament;
" But is, when unadorn'd, adorn'd the moſt."

THOMSON.

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MAY

MAID OF THE HAMLET.

CHAP. I.

" Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
" A wretch, a villain, loſt to love and truth,
" That can, with ſtudied, ſly, enſnaring art,
" Betray thy ſweet and unſuſpecting youth?"

BURN.

MATILDA, alone in her chamber, relapſed into her former melancholy. She involuntarily thought of the period when Howard would leave the Hamlet, and ſighed at the idea of it. " We part, then, for ever, in all probability," cried ſhe,

" and thus ends an intimacy ſo productive of pleaſure! Well, we have effected this ourſelves; it was our arguments prevailed on him to be reconciled to the world, and abandon his ſolitude."

Her reſt was broken and diſturbed in conſequence of the dejection and perturbation of her mind; and early in the morning ſhe was rouſed from a diſturbed ſlumber, by the maid, who delivered her a note, in which, to her infinite ſurpriſe, ſhe found the following lines:

" My dear Miſs STANLEY,

" IF you will truſt yourſelf, for an hour after breakfaſt this morning, to the care of an old man, you will greatly oblige

" Your faithful friend,

" J. ASHMORE."

She

She directly roſe, and, dreſſing herſelf in haſte, repaired to the parlour, where Mr. Belmore already was. She ſhowed him the note, and his ſurpriſe was equal to her's on reading it. That Aſhmore had ſomething of importance to communicate, he could not doubt; accordingly, the moment breakfaſt was over he bade her haſten to him.

She had not got many yards from the cottage, when ſhe ſaw Aſhmore approaching it. He greeted her with a benevolent ſmile, and drawing her arm under his, turned into a ſhady and retired lane.

"I fear," ſaid Aſhmore, after a pauſe of ſome minutes, "I diſturbed your repoſe this morning; but I am certain, when you hear the motives which prompted me to do ſo, you will forgive me.—Yes, Miſs Stanley, it was ſolicitude for your welfare

made me anxious to ſee you thus early. Knowing, as I do, from bitter experience, that innocence is too apt to be credulous, I thought you could not too ſoon be appriſed of the deſigns formed againſt you —too ſoon cautioned to guard a heart, rich in every virtue, from the allurements of a man unworthy of a place within it:— This monſter! this barbarian! for ſo with juſtice may he be ſtyled, who could form even a thought injurious to purity like thine, is Bromley."

"Bromley!" cried Matilda, ſtarting; "he harbour deſigns againſt me!"——

"Of the blackeſt nature," replied Mr. Aſhmore;—"but, inſtead of declaiming againſt him, I will relate a little tale, which will unfold his character to your view, and let you ſee the atrocities he is capable of committing.

"A

" A favourite ſiſter died three years ago. She was a widow, in diſtreſſed circumſtances, and unable to make any proviſion for an only daughter ſhe left behind her. I was then ſtruggling with misfortunes, (my preſent living I have only enjoyed a ſhort time, and procured by the intereſt of a valuable friend) and conſequently could not take my niece under my protection. She therefore continued in the town, where ſhe had always lived with her mother, under the care of a reſpectable family, who manifeſted the eſteem they felt for my departed ſiſter, by the kindneſs they extended to her orphan child. Her youth—her beauty—her innocence indeed, were truly intereſting; and wo!—wo! upon the wretch who blighted ſo a fair a flower!

" Bromley ſaw her by chance, and was ſtruck by her beauty. He found means to

be introduced at the houſe where ſhe lived: his inſinuating manners procured him, in a ſhort time, eaſy and conſtant acceſs to it. He was not long in ingratiating himſelf into her favour; and, as ſoon as he perceived the influence he had acquired over her heart, he made, as ſhe imagined, the moſt honourable propoſals, which he enjoined her, however, to keep a profound ſecret, and accounted in ſuch a manner for this injunction, as gave her no reaſon to doubt his ſincerity.

"In an evil hour ſhe conſented to a private marriage, and accompanied him to a country-houſe at ſome diſtance, taken for the expreſs purpoſe, where a perſon in the diſguiſe of a clergyman performed the ceremony. I was diſtracted on hearing of her flight. For three months I could diſcover no trace of her. At the expiration

of

of that time ſhe was found, by means of an old ſervant belonging to the family, with whom ſhe had reſided, in an obſcure village, whither ſhe retired on diſcovering the perfidy of Bromley, which he himſelf cruelly and audaciouſly avowed as ſoon as he grew tired of her.

"I haſtened to her the moment I learned her retreat. I will not pain you by attempting to deſcribe our meeting.—I prevailed on the unhappy girl, not without difficulty, to return to the lady from whoſe houſe ſhe had been ſeduced, and who loved her with a mother's tenderneſs.

"To have juſtice done her by Bromley, or vengeance taken on him, we found impoſſible, as ſhe had no witneſſes to prove any thing againſt him. From the kind and gentle treatment ſhe experienced, I indulged a hope of her ſorrow being alle-

viated by time, and of ſeeing her again reſtored to ſome degree of comfort; but this hope ſhe defeated, by withdrawing herſelf from the knowledge of all her friends, leaving a letter for me; in which ſhe declared, that ſhe could not ſupport the idea of continuing in a place, which reminded her continually of paſt felicity, and implored my pardon for all the anguiſh ſhe occaſioned me.

" Thus, ſweet Matilda, have I informed you of a misfortune I inceſſantly mourn; a misfortune, which has cauſed my ſon, the darling of my widowed heart, to be an exile from his native home. He early beheld his lovely couſin with the moſt partial regard, and I only prevented his avowing his attachment, till I ſaw ſome proſpect of fortune ſmiling upon him. That proſpect was juſt beginning to open, when ſhe became

fatally

fatally entangled in the ſnares of a villain. His anguiſh and diſappointment at loſing her—loſing her too in ſuch a manner, were ſo great, as to fill me with apprehenſions for his life. Change of ſcene, I hoped, might produce a ſalutary effect, and accordingly prevailed on him to go to Geneva, where an old friend of mine is ſettled, who often invited him thither."—Here the good man ceaſed; and Matilda, as ſoon as ſhe had recovered from the emotions his narrative excited, expreſſed the gratitude with which his ſolicitude about her, had filled her heart, and the ſympathy ſhe felt for his diſtreſs. He then returned with her towards the cottage, and parted with her at no great diſtance from it; being unfit for company at this period. With ſlow ſteps, and abſorbed in meditation, Matilda was purſuing the remainder of her way, when Howard

unexpectedly made his appearance. At that inſtant he did not notice her dejection; being totally engroſſed by intelligence he ſeemed anxious to communicate. "At length, Miſs Stanley," ſaid he, "you will get rid of a troubleſome friend; I have this morning wrote to a gentleman, recommended to me by Mr. Belmore, (as acquainted with ſuch matters) relative to a commiſſion."

Matilda's feelings on his firſt declaring his intention of entering into the army, have been already mentioned; ſhe was now tremblingly alive to every feeling of ſenſibility. "Will you not rejoice," continued he, "at being freed from a perſon, whoſe capriciouſneſs has ſo long interrupted your domeſtic tranquillity? Come, congratulate yourſelf on the proſpect you behold of being delivered from him."

Matilda

Matilda attempted to ſmile; the effort was unſucceſsful, and ſhe burſt into tears.

Howard looked amazed and ſhocked—ſhe ſtopped—a tremor ſhook her frame—ſhe grew faint and was unable to ſupport herſelf.

This was not a time for ſcruples, for doubts, for reſtraints. Such an object as Matilda Stanley in diſtreſs, ſuſpended every other idea than that of offering her aſſiſtance. He ſupported her in his arms; his accent was ſoftneſs itſelf. His aſſiduities for ſome time had not the deſired effect—his gentleneſs affected her ſtill more, and ſhe wept with increaſing violence.

Howard alternately preſt her trembling hand to his boſom and his lips; his fine eyes beaming with unutterable tenderneſs.

Matilda by degrees recovered, and as ſhe recovered, aſhamed of her ſituation, ſhe

gently diſengaged herſelf from Howard's arms, and, giving him an expreſſive look of gratitude, hurried on.

How ſtrange and how perverſe are prejudices! that very heart, whoſe tender emotions he could but a moment before with difficulty controul, now reproached him for having betrayed too great a weakneſs, in obeying the dictates of ſenſibility.

"O! Edward!" cried he to himſelf, as he tardily followed Matilda, "and is it thus I renounce—I abandon a ſex from whom you ſuſtained ſuch injuries? Yet, was not my reſolution to do ſo, raſh? is it not barbarous to condemn all, for the errors of one?"

By degrees, the ideas he had conceived of female levity, deceit, and inconſtancy, were removed; and with them, the diſtruſt, indifference, and diſlike they had given riſe

riſe to. As he gazed on the artleſs countenance of Matilda, he ſoftly exclaimed, "It was indeed the index of a celeſtial mind."

She reached the cottage before him; through the window he ſaw her leaning on Belmore's ſhoulder, her tears again falling. He ſtarted back!—"Before a witneſs, at leaſt," cried he, "I will not expoſe my weakneſs." He turned haſtily away; and yet, while retiring from the cottage, he almoſt envied Belmore. To be the mitigator of Matilda's diſtreſs, to have her again reclined on his boſom, to hang over her with pity and mingled emotions, to hear her gentle ſighs, to ſoftly wipe away her tears, to preſs her trembling hand—what idle fancies (thought he)—how ridiculous—but is not human nature a compound of wiſdom and folly?

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

" That eating canker, grief, with waſteful ſpite,
" Preys on the roſy bloom of youth."

ROWE.

THE narrative of the morning was circumſtantially related to Mr. Belmore, whoſe diſpoſition was too congenial to his adopted child's, not to be ſenſibly affected by the ſorrows it diſcloſed.

He ſhuddered with horror at the danger to which Matilda had been expoſed, and at the idea of the ſtratagems which might now

now be forming againſt her: he knew how difficult it was to guard againſt complicated villainy: the power, the art of Bromley rendered the deſign he meditated dreadful to his imagination; and, as the beſt method of putting a ſtop to them, he reſolved on removing Matilda for ſome time from the neighbourhood; convinced, when acquainted with the neceſſity he thought there was for it, ſhe would not oppoſe his intentions, however painful a ſeparation from him might be.

An incident occurred in the courſe of this day which tended to prove the propriety of his reſolution, and prevented any wavering in it. Bromley's truſty agent Le Rogne, tampered with his maid, and tried to prevail on her to promiſe acceſs to his maſter whenever Mr. Belmore was abſent from home: her honeſty, however, withſtood all his

his temptations, and ſhe openly communicated all that had paſſed between them to her maſter.

Thus did Bromley, by too great ſolicitude to accompliſh his deſigns, enable them more effectually to be counteracted.

Though confident to an exceſs, he had not aſſurance to venture to the houſe, after the laſt interview between him and Matilda.

His cruel relation, his dependent ſituation, were all indeed viſionary misfortunes; he had long been releaſed from the authority of connections, as well as the controul of principle.

The information received from the ſervant ſtrengthened the apprehenſions of Belmore, as it convinced him Bromley would leave no point untried to accompliſh his purpoſes.

He

He determined therefore to take immediate ſteps for Matilda's removal. In the moſt ſoothing manner he informed her of his intentions of parting with her for ſome time; ſhe could ſcarcely credit what ſhe heard:—Half breathleſs with grief and diſmay, ſhe wildly exclaimed—"You are not ſerious! Oh! my more than parent, you cannot ſurely part with me! You will not ſend away your poor child! I cannot indeed ſupport a ſeparation from you!"

Belmore preſſed her to his boſom. "Oh! darling of my affections! (cried the good old man, while his tears fell upon her cheek) "let the pangs you ſee me ſuffer at the idea of a ſeparation from you, convince you that nothing but abſolute neceſſity could make me think of ſuch a meaſure:—"But there is no neceſſity," ſaid ſhe; "protected by you, I have nothing to fear from the treachery of Bromley."

"Alas!

"Alas! my child," replied Belmore "I much fear I ſhould be unequal to cope with the cunning of this moſt inſidious man:" —"We may fly him then," interrupted ſhe.

"From clime to clime, would I fly with you," cried Belmore; "but, alas! in every clime might we not find a Bromley."—Matilda wept and he proceeded:

"In the ſituation in which I mean to place you, he will perceive all his attempts muſt prove abortive, and weary, at length of expectations which he finds cannot be realized, he will, I have no doubt, give up his purſuit, and then I may receive peace and my Matilda again to my boſom."

Belmore continued his diſcourſe. He expatiated on her danger, and the ſecurity of the ſituation he pointed out to her.

Matilda

Matilda had a heart, which, though breaking with regret, was ever bowed down to conviction; ſhe reaſoned with herſelf; ſhe acknowledged the juſtice of his arguments, and that they demanded her compliance.

Both her parents had been allied to illuſtrious families, though neither had been noticed by them, in conſequence of their marriage, which was conſidered imprudent in the extreme. Lady Denham, however, a relation of her mother's, as ſhe grew up, condeſcended to notice her, and frequently aſked her to her houſe, to which, however, Matilda as yet had never gone. From her profeſſions of friendſhip, Belmore judged, for a ſhort time ſhe would be pleaſed to have Matilda under her protection; and accordingly wrote to her ladyſhip to inform her;—That ſome particular

lar circumſtances had occurred, which would make him happy to accept for Matilda, the invitation her ladyſhip had ſo frequently given her.

He retired to write this letter, leaving Matilda overwhelmed with dejection: ſhe ſincerely wiſhed ſhe had never known Bromley, whoſe baſe deſigning ſchemes were about exiling her from all ſhe held dear on earth: while breathing this wiſh, the parlour-door opened, and Howard entered.

She was leaning on a table, her hands were claſped together, and her countenance indicated her internal agitation.

He ſtarted back,—Good heaven, thought he, am I ever to be betrayed into weakneſs by ſuch ſights?—He would have retreated, but the eyes of Matilda were directed towards him, with an irreſiſtible ſoftneſs, as

ſhe

ſhe haſtily exclaimed—"Won't you come in?"

He ſat down beſide her—he looked at and from her ſeveral times. "In no ſtation, no ſituation," ſaid he to himſelf, "is felicity permanent; the ſmiles of Matilda are vaniſhed; that gaiety which had power to mitigate the anguiſh of my feelings, is overcaſt by gloom and dejection.

"I am almoſt tempted to imagine, Miſs Stanley," ſaid he, "that my company has proved infectious, and of courſe"—"Oh! no," interrupted ſhe; "but the idea of a ſeparation from my deareſt friend, is attended with a pain I cannot expreſs. This is, in reality, my firſt real ſorrow."

Howard took her hand:—his eyes were faſtened upon her face with the moſt tender expreſſion in them; his boſom palpitated; and a prayer ſtole from the moſt ſecret re-

ceſſes

ceſſes of his heart, that this might be her laſt real ſorrow. His lips touched her hand:—ſhe attempted to withdraw it:—her eyes involuntarily reſted on him for a moment, and the livelieſt bluſhes ſuffuſed her cheeks.

Howard alſo coloured:—as he caught her timid glance, he let her hand drop from his, and ſlightly bowing, precipitately quitted the room.

Matilda's mind now became occupied with ſuch emotions as ſhe had never before experienced—emotions, however, infinitely more pleaſing than painful. She recalled the aſſiduities—the tenderneſs—ſo unexpected, ſo delightfully ſoothing of Howard, to her view; his anxiety for her reſtoration to cheerfulneſs—his concern for her diſtreſs—every word he uttered was recorded in her heart.

"What

"What but eſteem," cried ſhe to herſelf, "could occaſion his ſolicitude about me?"

The rapture which this ſuppoſition inſpired, is not to be wondered at: warm as her opinion of his merits was—next to Mr. Belmore ſhe reſpected him; in his preſence ſhe felt delight; in his abſence ſhe experienced ſadneſs: but while ſhe nouriſhed his idea, ſhe was ignorant of the ſtrength of her affection for him.

The proud ſpirit of Howard now fluctuated between its natural philanthropy and its acquired diſcontent. The more, however, he knew of Matilda, the more he inveſtigated the innocence of her diſpoſition, the leſs his prejudices became; thoſe prejudices, to which, in a great degree, was owing his preſent gloomineſs of temper, gradually, imperceptibly, almoſt inſenſibly;

ſenſibly, ſhe ſtole upon his eſteem, pleaded her own cauſe, and that of her ſex.

When Matilda was awakened from the pleaſing trance into which ſhe had fallen, and conſidered the approaching period when ſhe muſt quit the Hamlet, her protector, and Howard, a ſudden agony ſeized her, and even the thoughts of returning wanted power to conſole, by reflecting Howard, ere that period, would be in poſſeſſion of a commiſſion, and far diſtant from thoſe ſcenes where they had enjoyed ſo many hours of harmony and peace.

Howard returned to dinner; he was more than uſually abſent and penſive; Matilda this day was alſo ſilent and dejected; and Belmore participated in the uneaſineſs of both.

From this time Howard became almoſt a reſident at the cottage: in vain he tried

to

to perſuade himſelf it was the friendſhip of Belmore alone drew him thither; the emotions he experienced on ſeeing Matilda, convinced him to the contrary.

The only happineſs he felt, was in her company; yet this happineſs was often checked by ſudden recollections; and it was eaſy to perceive that ſome ſecret ſorrow, ſtill heavier than any he had divulged, weighed heavy on his heart. A month elapſed without bringing any letter from Lady Denham; but, confident of her ſincerity, Belmore ſuppoſed ſhe was abſent from her houſe at the time his letter reached it; and that, the moment ſhe returned to it, he ſhould hear, as he expected, from her.

Matilda dreaded the arrival of this expected letter, as much as he wiſhed for it; though ſhe was now almoſt a priſoner, as ſhe feared to venture far from home, leſt

ſhe ſhould encounter Bromley, who ſhe knew kept a conſtant watch upon her, and made ſeveral unſucceſsful attempts to procure an opportunity of ſpeaking or delivering a letter to her.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

" —— Her varying charms
" A thouſand agitations ſhow."

BLACKLOCK.

MATILDA's fears about quitting the Hamlet, were at length removed by the following letter from Lady Denham:

" TO GEORGE BELMORE, ESQ.

" SIR, " *Denham-Lodge.*

" I am much flattered by your wiſh of placing Miſs Stanley under my care; but

with infinite regret muſt, for the preſent, decline that honour, as an unexpected addition of company deprives me of the power of accommodating her as I could wiſh, the apartments I deſigned to appropriate to her uſe being now occupied.

" Your fair ward will do me juſtice, I hope, in believing I much regret not having her my gueſt.

" I am, Sir,

" Your moſt obedient,

" Humble ſervant,

" H. D."

" This, then," ſaid Belmore, who at once developed her ladyſhip's motives for declining a viſit from Matilda, " is the friendſhip of the world:—ſhe, who was courted, while ſuppoſed heireſs of the rich domain of Woodford, is now neglected, ſince

ſince inhabiting a lowly cottage in a Hamlet. Never, my child (cried he), while the glow of indignation mantled his cheeks—never, while thoſe arms can foſter or protect you, ſhall you be expoſed to the contempt of the proud, the ſlights of the low-minded:—and, ere I quit this earthly ſcene, I truſt I ſhall have the happineſs of ſeeing you united to ſome kindred ſpirit, on whoſe care and tenderneſs you may ſecurely depend.

"Like yourſelf, my Matilda, in many reſpects new to the world, I am hurt and ſurpriſed at every inſtance of illiberality; I have been too apt to miſtake inſinuation for ſenſibility; but experience, almoſt daily takes ſomething from credulity, and gradually removes the veil which ſcreened the vices and follies of mankind from view.

"This woman's conduct muſt not, however, diſturb our tranquillity:—In Provi-

dence we will place our truſt, nor let apprehenſions of evil embitter our happineſs."

This letter, far from giving pain to Matilda, afforded her the higheſt pleaſure.—Its coldneſs was diſregarded in the delight ſhe felt at continuing in the Hamlet:—Her heart, her hopes were centred here; and her tranſports were too great to be concealed.

Her blooming cheeks, her ſparkling eyes, denoted her feelings:—She embraced Mr. Belmore, and bid him not regret a repulſion which continued her to him.

In her joy he ſoon had reaſon to participate; as Hillgrove, calling in, informed them, he had juſt ſeen 'Squire Bromley in a chaiſe and four, followed by three or four grooms, ſcouring acroſs the country; and, on aſking a ſervant the occaſion of this mighty ſpeed, he ſaid, his maſter was going off,

off, expreſs, to a rich old uncle, who was dying.

" So he is gone," continued Hillgrove, " on the ſcent of two thouſand a year, to try and get the ſtart, if he can, of the reſt; to be in at the death is the point; ſince ſuch jockeys as himſelf and thoſe he has to deal with, would never mind clapping a few papers in the fire, if much in their way. Lord! how long before ſuch a wind-fall would come to an honeſt man!"

Freed from their uneaſineſs about Bromley, the tranquillity of Belmore and Matilda was perfectly reſtored; and the neceſſity for confining herſelf almoſt entirely to the cottage being now over, Matilda indulged her ſelf, the firſt evening of her emancipation, with a ramble, leaving Mr. Belmore buſy with his labourers, who were now gathering in the harveſt.

CHAP. IV.

" O Love! how are thy precious, ſweeteſt minutes
" Thus ever croſs'd, thus vex'd with diſappointments!"

.....

" Malicious, meddling Chance is ever buſy,
" To bring us Fears, Diſquiets, and Delays."

ROWE'S ULYSSES.

MATILDA's feet, as if by inſtinct, guided her to a little hill, from whence Howard's retreat was ſeen—the bright rays of the ſun, reflecting on ſome of its broken windows, gave a pleaſing grandeur to the ſcene:—ſhe looked—ſhe ſighed, and, in contemplating

contemplating it, forgot all intention of proceeding. His appearance, at laſt, rouſed her from her reverie—ſhe ſtarted! and immediately proceeded to meet him, with an intention of directing him to the field where Mr. Belmore was, whom ſhe concluded he was coming to ſee. Pale, dejected, and diſordered, he met her. "Well, Miſs Stanley," ſaid he, "my mandate is arrived, and, in a few days, I bid adieu to the Hamlet." "Your commiſſion!" exclaimed Matilda, in involuntary agitation. "Yes, the cruel perſuaſions of Mr. Belmore drive me from the only ſpot where I was capable of enjoying the leaſt degree of pleaſure; yet, why deem cruel, what friendſhip dictated? Ignorant of my ſufferings, he imagines an active life will blunt my ſorrows; but, alas! over a rooted ſadneſs, I fear, it will have little power."

"You ſhould not yield," cried Matilda, much affected, "to deſpair; to ſtruggle againſt misfortunes, is ſurely to break their force: but if you accompany me to the cottage, Mr. Belmore, I hope, will be able to convince you, that if ſorrow cannot be entirely removed, it can at leaſt, by ſelf-exertions, be much aſſuaged."

"I will," cried he; "yet I had better not, ſince every viſit will but render the laſt more painful. The ſocial hours I have enjoyed within it can never be forgotten! They are all of life I wiſh to remember; the reſt is dreadful!"—He ſtopped, as if overcome by a ſecret horror. At length, regaining ſome degree of compoſure, he attempted to ſpeak on indifferent ſubjects; but the effort proved vain—his ſoul was engroſſed entirely by melancholy ideas.

"The friendſhip of Mr. Belmore has indeed," he ſaid, as he turned with Matilda towards

towards the cottage, " been moſt ſoothing; nor to your pity am I leſs indebted: my roughneſs, my aſperity, merited not ſuch gentleneſs; I ſaw all through a falſe medium; my mind was tinctured by ſuſpicion; but I am now convinced, alas! too fatally convinced, that real innocence and ſimplicity are to be found in the female ſex. Oh! why," continued he, taking her hand with irrepreſſible emotion, and caſting a deſpairing look to heaven,—" Oh! why did we ever meet, ſince not before this period?" Matilda's colour changed; her hand trembled in Howard's, and ſcarcely had ſhe power to proceed. At this critical moment Patty Hillgrove appeared from a little wood, and, running up to Matilda, informed her, ſhe was coming to drink tea with her.

Howard inſtantly dropped the hand he held, and, without ſpeaking, precipitately

retired; while the ſoft eyes of Matilda involuntarily followed him.

"Well, Lord bleſs me," cried Patty, "it is a droll thing of Mr. Howard to run away ſo: to be ſure, when firſt he came here, I thought him a little crazy, always walking about by himſelf, and living amongſt graves and tomb-ſtones; but, my opinion is altered lately, in conſequence of what farmer Gwynn's wife has told me, and, inſtead of being mad, I find he is only croſſed in love."

"In love!" repeated Matilda, with involuntary emotion; then recollecting herſelf, ſhe inquired, with aſſumed calmneſs, what ſhe had heard to make her think ſo.—"Why, I went the other evening (cried Patty) to drink tea with Mrs. Gwynn; ſo amongſt other matters, I began to talk of the ſtrange life Mr. Howard led; upon

which

which Mrs. Gwynn ſaid ſhe could tell me ſomething that would ſurpriſe me, if I promiſed to keep it a ſecret; as her huſband (ſhe knew not why, indeed), had deſired her never to mention a ſyllable of the matter to any one. I gave her the promiſe ſhe required, and ſhe then told me, how three months ago, a beautiful lady, quite in the bloom of life, ſtopped one evening, in a hired chaiſe, before the farm, and requeſted her, Mrs. Gwynn, who was ſtanding at the gate, to give the poſtillion a direction to the Abbey; upon which, Mrs. Gwynn told her, as how the chaiſe could not make its way to the Abbey, the roads all about it were ſo broken and rugged; but, if ſhe choſe to alight, ſhe ſhould have ſome one to guide her to it, ſhe ſaid, and welcome. She accordingly did, and Mrs. Gwynn ſent one of her little boys with her.

She

She did not ſtay long, and came back all in tears, and refuſed all Mrs. Gwynn's offers of refreſhment; and got into the chaiſe again, and nobody could find where ſhe came from, nor whither ſhe went; and no doubt ſhe is a ſweetheart of Mr. Howard's. And ſo, to be ſure, I ſhould like, of all things, to hear their ſtory; it is ſo pleaſant to hear of all the croſſes of love; and I wiſh, Miſs Matilda, ſome day or other, you would aſk him about it, and what makes him live ſo oddly, in that diſmal old place, by himſelf."

Matilda could make no reply; a pang, unfelt before, now ſmote her heart, and though ſhe could not penetrate the myſtery which enveloped Howard, its ſource ſhe conjectured to be love: hopeleſs, ſhe could not believe it, as the lady evidently purſued him; yet, that ſhe appeared diſappointed

in

in the purſuit, her tears evidently denoted; yet why, if young and beautiful?—ſhe was loſt in conjecture: the tale was a ſtrange one; and, the more ſhe reflected on it, the more ſhe was amazed.

She found Mr. Belmore, with his friend Aſhmore, waiting for her at the cottage. She informed the former of the arrival of Howard's commiſſion, which gave him ſenſible pleaſure; and, after tea, he propoſed to Aſhmore paying a viſit to the young ſoldier, and learning when he quitted the Hamlet.

Patty ſoon grew tired of ſtaying with Matilda, who had not ſpirits to ſupport a converſation with her; without any ceremony, therefore, ſhe departed in queſt of more amuſement than ſhe could, at preſent find with her, and Matilda retired to the little embowered retreat in the garden: here

here ſhe felt moſt forcibly how cloſely pleaſure was attended by pain; in the morning her ſoul was fraught with joy; in the evening it was ſinking beneath deſpondence. Howard, quitting the Hamlet, filled her with regret; a regret which was aggravated by the idea of his going, perhaps, for ever, to join the fair ſtranger who had ſought him out in his ſolitude.—Abſorbed in melancholy reflections, the evening dew fell faſt upon her unobſerved; nor did ſhe ſtir till the love-lorn ſong of the nightingale ſweetly diſturbed her meditations. She then haſtened to the houſe, where Belmore ſoon joined her, and they ſat down to a vegetable repaſt. She complained of a head-ach, and ſoon after ſupper retired to her chamber, but not to reſt; her mind was diſturbed, and in her tranſient ſlumbers ſhe dreamed of Howard;

and

and imagined, in his new profeſſion, ſhe ſaw him encountering innumerable difficulties.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

" May we hereafter meet in bliſs!
" We now, alas! muſt part."

HERMIT OF WARKWORTH.

WITH the earlieſt light ſhe aroſe, and, ſoftly unlatching the cottage-door, ſtrolled out, in hopes the freſhneſs of the morning air would exhilarate her ſpirits; but how great was her aſtoniſhment on beholding Howard leaning penſively on the ruſtic gate, that opened from the road upon the little bridge!—they ſtarted on beholding each

each other; and ſhe would have retreated, had he not, by an impetuous motion, flown forward, and, catching her hand, beſought her to purſue her walk.

Thus urged, ſhe could not refuſe, and they ſauntered towards the village, from whence the cottagers were repairing to their daily labours. Cheered by the bird's melodious lay, which appeared as nature's morning hymn, to hail the glorious orb of day—"This, indeed," cried Howard, "is a proſpect might well aſſuage all ſadneſs but deſpair:—how lovely is the contemplation of innocence and induſtry, and the beautiful country by which we are ſurrounded; yet thoſe charming ſcenes I muſt ſoon relinquiſh—thoſe

Native bowers of innocence and eaſe,
Scenes of my youth,—when every charm would pleaſe;
How often have I paus'd on every charm,
The ſhelter'd cot, the cultivated farm!

"Bliſsful

"Bliſsful ſcenes," exclaimed he, with increaſing emotion, "I ſhall no more reviſit ye." Surely," cried Matilda, "you may hope to return." "I do not hope it," ſaid he, "I cannot wiſh to return to a country where all the proſpects of my youth are blaſted; where vice and infamy have entailed unutterable woe upon me; where thoſe moſt dear are loſt for ever; and *all* that has yet power to charm, is dangerous to ſeek." His language filled Matilda with the moſt eager curioſity to know the ſource of his afflictions; and particularly ſhe wiſhed to know, whether the lady ſhe had heard of had been at all acceſſary to them. Timidity and delicacy, however, alike reſtrained her from expreſſing ſuch a wiſh; and with affected careleſſneſs, ſhe aſked him when he departed. "The day after to-morrow," ſaid he; "and already I have

have taken what may probably be a laſt farewell of the environs of the village, which a thouſand fond recollections will for ever endear to my heart. "However unfortunate and depreſſed," he added, "a degree of vanity will, I believe, ever adhere to us, and make us deſirous of eſteem and admiration. Actuated by its powerful impulſe, I wiſh to excuſe that roughneſs and aſperity which too often appeared in my conduct, and aſſure you they reſulted from ſorrow, not from my real diſpoſition. To live in your remembrance, is now my only hope: the idea of being ſometimes an ideal gueſt in the cottage of Belmore ſoothes my fancy.

"Say then, you can excuſe the infirmities of a proud ſpirit, which could ill brook diſgrace. Did you know my ſtory, you would then, I believe, only pity. Alas! much

much as I regretted my deſtiny, till I beheld you, I did not eſteem it half ſo ſevere. Now, O gracious heaven, I cannot forbear execrating the perfidious wretch, who, under the ſemblance of love, received my wedded vows, and brought infamy and wretchedneſs to my arms."

Matilda ſtarted!—She trembled, and had not power to proceed. Her quivering lips would have repeated his laſt words, but the ſounds died away.

Full of penetration, Howard, in a moment, diſcerned the feelings of her ſoul. He could have wept over her in the anguiſh of his heart; but, delicate as tender, he checked his emotions, and, affecting compoſure, ſaid, he could not wonder at her aſtoniſhment; that, if ſhe wiſhed, he would tranſcribe for her the particulars of his life; in which, the reaſons for keeping his mar-

riage

riage a ſecret, would be fully explained. She now recollected herſelf, ſaid ſhe ſhould be glad to ſee them, then, ſlightly bowing, turned towards home. Howard followed her. As they entered the ſhady lane leading towards the cottage, he took her clay-cold hand: "This," cried he, "may be conſidered almoſt a laſt adieu, ſince I expect to depart ſo ſoon; allow me now, therefore, to thank you for your pity, your kindneſs unto me: may the wiſhes I have formed for your happineſs be more ſucceſsful, than thoſe I breathed for my own; may this hand never be given, but to a being worthy of the treaſure it will put him in poſſeſſion of; may he, the bleſſed mortal who receives it—may he be at once the tender friend, the faithful guardian, the"—He pauſed involuntarily, and the paleneſs of his cheek denoted what was paſſing in his

his heart. After a momentary ſtruggle, he proceeded in a voice ſcarcely articulate: "Some kind chance may perhaps convey to me the delightful intelligence of your happineſs. Oh! how grateful—how welcome to my ſoul!"

A trickling tear now ſpoke the fullneſs of Matilda's heart, as ſhe withdrew her hand, and with tottering ſteps proceeded to the cottage.

Howard returned to his abode in agonies almoſt too great for reaſon to ſupport. He groaned, he wept; he execrated the wretch, whoſe artfices had deprived him of liberty.

Had he been free, he now ſaw youth, beauty, and innocence might have been his, and all the ſweets of domeſtic life—thoſe ſweets which he was compelled to relinquiſh, and formed to enjoy even with a degree of enthuſiaſm.

As

As he wrote his ſtory, his feelings grew more compoſed; there was a ſoothing charm in the idea of Matilda weeping over his ſufferings.

Belmore called upon him, and congratulated him on the arrival of his commiſſion; he alſo agreed to go the firſt ſtage of his journey with him.

The dejection of Matilda could not eſcape Belmore's notice; but ſhe attributed it to the effects of a cold: in vain ſhe endeavoured to ſhake off the languor which oppreſſed her heart; while the idea of Howard's wretchedneſs haunted it continually, all efforts for doing ſo proved ineffectual.

The evening previous to his departure now arrived, and ſhe was fearful he had forgotten his promiſe to her. Soon after tea Mr. Belmore went out, and ſhe faun-

tered into the garden; where, in a few moments, Howard, by appearing, convinced her her fears were groundleſs.

Pale, languid, and dejected, he met her; and preſented to her a little manuſcript. "Theſe pages, my dear Miſs Stanley," ſaid he, "contain a ſhort and unvarniſhed tale. Should the misfortunes I have here diſcloſed, incline you to excuſe the aſperities to which they alone gave riſe, I ſhall be more than compenſated for any pain the narrating them has coſt me; but, even if you ſhould not excuſe, you will at leaſt ceaſe to wonder at theſe aſperities, when you find the proſpects, the hopes, the honours of my youth were blaſted by the moſt abhorred perfidy.

"I go," cried he, with a ſigh, "perhaps never to return; I go, with a heart impreſſed by your excellencies, and grateful for your

your kindneſſes. Mr. Belmore, on reading theſe pages, will eaſily conjecture the feelings which made me envelope myſelf in myſtery. Alas! the only conſolation I can derive, amidſt my miſery, is, that the bluſh which burns on my cheek, is for the perfidy of others, not my own; and that my life, though embittered by misfortune, is untainted by reproach.

" Adieu, my dear Miſs Stanley; I muſt haſten away, or my reſolution will entirely fail, and I ſhall ſtrive to linger out the parting moment. Farewell, then," he continued, taking her hand and preſſing it to his boſom, " farewell! moſt amiable, moſt lovely, moſt beloved of women; as Hamlet ſays, let the parting words be—Adieu! adieu! remember me!"

He then precipitately departed, leaving Matilda motionleſs as a ſtatue:—A ſhort

time, however, reſtored the faculties which anguiſh had ſuſpended, and ſhe emphatically pronounced—"Remember thee! yes, Howard, while I live!" Tears now burſt from her eyes, which relieved in ſome degree the weight upon her heart, but ſoftened her, at the ſame time, into an enthuſiaſm of tenderneſs; for,

> There is a tear,
> Which, ſtreaming for an object lov'd and loſt,
> With mournful magic, tortures and delights;
> Relieves us—while its ſweet ſuppreſſion loads,
> And, by augmenting, blunts the ſting of woe.

She received his manuſcript as the legacy of an invaluable friend; with a fearful kind of curioſity ſhe wiſhed, yet dreaded to peruſe it.

Her hat ſhaded her eyes from the obſervation of Belmore. At ſupper, he told her they

they would not meet again till the enſuing evening, as he and Howard propoſed ſetting off at the dawn of day. He gave her a thouſand charges to amuſe her ſpirits till his return; then tenderly embracing her, they retired to their reſpective chambers. The manuſcript ſhe had not yet mentioned to him: ſhe durſt not truſt her voice with Howard's name: ſhe reſolved, however, to pay him the compliment of putting it into his hands, ere ſhe peruſed it.

The morning was juſt opening, when ſhe was rouſed from an uneaſy ſlumber by the trampling of horſes; her heart beat quick, and ſhe was almoſt tempted to riſe, and give Howard that adieu, which the night before ſhe had not power to do: tranſient, however, was this idea; the impropriety of ſuch an action, almoſt immediately occurred to her, and ſhe reſolved, within the moſt ſecret re-

ceſſes of her heart, to conceal what her principles diſapproved, and by the exertion of her reaſon ſhe hoped to ſubdue.

She heard Howard's voice as he ſtood near her window; he ſeemed taking leave of the domeſtics.

In a few moments he and Belmore mounted their horſes and departed.

Matilda raiſed herſelf in the bed, and liſtened with the moſt profound attention till the horſes feet could no longer be heard. "He is gone, then," ſaid ſhe, ſinking upon her pillow, in a flood of tears, "and we have only known him to feel regret;—he is gone then, and we ſhall never —never meet again."

She aroſe, oppreſſed with grief and languor. As Sterne ſays, "the Sun looked bright to every eye in the village but hers." The maid prepared her breakfaſt, but ſhe could

could not taſte it: her heart was ſick; and her melancholy caſt an air of gloomineſs around her.

She took up a book; its contents intereſted her not.—The manuſcript lay temptingly on her toilet—ſhe could no longer retain her reſolution of waiting Mr. Belmore's return.—She broke the ſeal, with a trembling hand, and peruſed the following contents.

HOWARD's STORY.

" Had it pleas'd Heav'n
" To try me with afflictions; had they rain'd
" All kinds of ſores and ſhames on my bare head,
" Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
" Giv'n to captivity me and my utmoſt hopes,
" I ſhould have found in ſome place of my ſoul
" A drop of patience: but, alas! to make me
" The fix'd figure for the time of ſcorn
" To point his ſlow and moving finger at!
" Yet I could bear that too—well, very well:
" But there, where I had garner'd up my heart,
" Where either I muſt live, or have no life,
" The fountain from the which my current runs,
" Or elſe dries up; to be diſcarded thence,
" Or keep it as a ciſtern for foul toads
" To knot and gender in—turn thy complexion there,
" Patience, thou young and roſe-lip'd cherubim."

SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO.

AT that period in life, when infantile amuſements are giving place to juvenile ardour, my attachment for Edward Pelham commenced.

commenced. Ardent, generous, and feeling, he derived ſtill greater dignity and ſplendour from his virtues, than from his birth or fortune. Unexpected viciſſitudes deprived my father of independence: and at his death, left me totally unprovided for. My mother had long before paid the laſt debt of nature, ſo that I appeared to ſtand alone upon the great ſtage of life, without one guiding hand to lead me forward; one ſoothing voice to counſel my inexperienced youth, or diminiſh the ſorrows of my fate.

Edward heard my misfortunes; he flew to me, with the fervour of friendſhip; and inſiſted on my accompanying him to the habitation of his father, who, actuated by a ſpirit all powerful as his ſon's, made me conſider his home as my own, and by daily kindneſſes, adminiſtered by the hand of delicacy, made me forget my dependent ſituation.

In two years after this, he conſulted me on my future deſtiny in life; and finding my wiſhes correſponded with his, equipped me for the Eaſt Indies, charging me never to forget I had ſtill in England a parent and a brother, upon whoſe fortune I had claims that ever ſhould be anſwered.

I left them with a heart oppreſſed with gratitude, but a ſoul that glowed at the proſpect of obtaining an independence, ſince a life of inglorious eaſe was hateful to me.

In the military line I arrived in India; there I continued ſeven years; but my conſtitution yielding to the climate, I obtained leave to reſign, well aſſured I ſhould enjoy more real happineſs in the limited indulgencies my income had now the power of procuring me, than when ſurrounded by Aſiatic ſplendour, and debarred the converſe of thoſe to whom I was attached by every tie of ſympathy.

I had heard but twice in my long abſence from my friends: to the miſcarriage of their letters, however, not to any neglect, I imputed not having heard more frequently from them, and during my voyage I anticipated with rapture, the joy, the ſurpriſe my unexpected return would give them; and hailed the white cliffs of Albion with unutterable delight.

To Broomland, the ſeat of Pelham, I haſtened a few hours after I had landed. Good heaven! with what emotions of delight did I commence my journey. I ſcarcely allowed myſelf time for refreſhment, much leſs for any inquiry relative to him or his father. At a little village contiguous to the caſtle I put up my horſes, and, leaving my ſervant, proceeded onward without delay.

Every cot, every tree, every field, reminded me of ſome happy ſcene—ſome

tender proof of recollected love; every ſpot was endeared to me by the remembrance of Edward. The ivyed walls of the Caſtle, that roſe above the nodding elms which ſurrounded it, at laſt bleſſed my ſight.

"Hail! dear aſylum!" I cried, with a degree of enthuſiaſm, "of my youth; happy ſeat of virtue, where hoſpitality woos the baſhful ſtranger to his food; and the bounty of benevolence cheers the deſponding children of calamity."

The maſſy gate which led into the dark and winding avenue before the Caſtle, lay half open. I entered, and, as I advanced, was ſurpriſed to find all within ſilent and ſolitary.

Joy and gladneſs, during my abode, had dwelt within its precincts; and this unuſual ſtillneſs filled me with alarm. I reached the Caſtle—Alas! it was no longer the

the manſion of mirth. The doors and windows were barred; the ſhrubberies around it were overgrown with weeds and brambles; and all, by a melancholy air of wildneſs, denoted a dreadful change.

I turned back to the Porter's lodge, which was juſt beſide the gate. Here I ſaw an old woman ſpinning, who I immediately recollected to be the Porter's wife. She threw down her diſtaff at my entrance, but did not remember me. I took her hand: I would have ſpoken, but my feelings choaked my utterance. In a few minutes, however, I recovered, ſufficiently to be able to ſpeak, and aſked her, "if ſhe did not recollect Howard, the former companion of her young maſter?"

I can give you no adequate idea of the joy the poor creature expreſſed on hearing my name, and recognizing me; but it ſoon gave place

place to ſorrow; and, making me ſit down on a wicker chair, ſhe told me the following ſimple tale.

" Alas! Sir, there has been ſad doings at the great houſe ſince you went away; every thing topſy-turvy, and all gone to ruin. My old maſter (God reſt his ſoul) died three years ago; and many, many a tear did his death cauſe to be ſhed. We were, however, in ſome degree, comforted for his loſs, by having his ſon over us; and a fine young gentleman he was, as one ſhould ſee on a ſummer's day. Well, Sir, he had not long been his own maſter, when away he goes, and marries in ſome diſtant part of the country a young lady; and then there was ſuch doings here on bringing her home! She was a beautiful creature, to be ſure; but I never thought much good of her; for ſhe uſed to prink and prank herſelf out ſo,

and

and never came, as old Madam was wont to do, to aſk a body how they did; but always looked proud, and ſome way or other, as if ſhe thought no one good enough to ſpeak to her, but thoſe who were as great as herſelf. He, poor ſoul, ſaw no fault in her: but ſhe, as if an angel could not make her happy, to be ſure he was as good, and almoſt as handſome as an angel, began to intrigue with a ſtrange ſort of a bold outlandiſh fellow, who they got acquainted with in London, and invited down to the Caſtle; where it was ſoon plain enough to every body but my maſter himſelf, that ſhe was making a complete dupe of him.

"Well, let people ſay what they will, wickedneſs cannot always thrive or be concealed; ſo, when Madam leaſt expected it, her ſins were brought to light. My poor maſter was then in a moſt perilous taking, and

and I don't know what he might not have been tempted to do to his falſe friend, had he not made his eſcape from his fury.—Madam was ſent from the Caſtle, and in a few months my maſter got a divorce; but from that hour never held up his head, and pined and drooped ſo much, that he was adviſed to go to foreign parts beyond ſea, to try whether change of ſcene would do him any good. Accordingly he went, and the Caſtle was locked up and the keys given to my huſband, and we have only heard once or twice about him from the Steward, ſince he went, and I underſtand he is ſtill in great ſorrow: but heaven will, I hope, in its own good time, reſtore him to comfort, for he gave it to many. My poor man and I pray for him night, noon, and morning."

"Comfort!" thought I, as ſhe concluded. "Alas! I know too well the diſpoſition of Edward,

Edward, and that after a diſappointment of this nature, he never can recover his happineſs."

Overpowered by my feelings, I quitted the cottage; and in retracing every dear and well-known path about the Caſtle, gave way to a melancholy, which ſoftened my whole ſoul. It was now the autumnal ſeaſon; the noon of the day was paſt, and the ſtillneſs of the ſcene was only interrupted by the breeze, which ſighed amongſt the trees and the low plaint of the birds. "Thus," cried I, as I looked at the leaves which ſtrewed the foot-path; "thus are the hopes of him, who owns this rich domain, fallen and ſcattered; but theſe leaves (I continued) fall to enrich their parent earth; ſpring will re-cloak the groves, and reſtore all to primeval beauty: but man never experiences a ſecond ſpring—never ſcarcely

experiences a renovation of the hopes which perfidy has blighted."

I longed to be with him, and returned to the cottage, in order to inquire his reſidence. Here I found the old woman's huſband, who joined with her in preſſing me to partake of a frugal repaſt; but ſorrow rendered my heart too full to permit me to accept their invitation. I ſent for the Steward to inquire where Pelham then was; but he could not give me the information I required: all he could tell me of his maſter was, that he was at preſent on the Continent, where, he underſtood, he led a wandering life: in conſequence of which, he adviſed me, inſtead of going in queſt of him, merely to write, and he would forward my letter to a mercantile houſe in Leghorn, from whence all his maſter's letters were ſent to him. I followed his advice, ſpecifying the place I

was

was to be found in, which was a village in Wales, whither, for ſome time, I meant to retire.

The ſituation of this village, was retired and romantic. Nature here reigned in luxuriant beauty; and the inhabitants were the children of ſimplicity. In one of my rambles, I was particularly ſtruck with the beauty of a little cottage; which, on the brow of a hill, overlooked a beautiful valley, diverſified by trees, ſhrubs, and flowers, and watered by a ſmooth unſullied ſtream, which reflected all thoſe lovely images of nature. As I gazed on this little Eden, a lady, in deep mourning, appeared, aſcending a winding path to the cottage. I looked at her attentively, and thought I never before had ſeen aught ſo lovely; her form was elegant; there was faſcination in her eyes; and the pale roſe, which bloomed upon

upon her cheek, conveyed an idea of the moſt bewitching delicacy.

Thrice in the courſe of this day, I took a circuit round the valley, but ſaw her no more. I felt diſappointment, and determined to aſk the Curate, who knew every body, about her: he laughed at my inquiries, but did not heſitate anſwering them. He ſaid ſhe was in mourning for her huſband; that by marrying him ſhe had diſobliged her friends; and at his death, diſdaining to force herſelf upon them, retired, with the ſmall income he left her, to Wales, as a place of cheapneſs and privacy: he farther added, that her manners were as attractive as her looks; and aſſured me, though ſuch a thing was dangerous, he would bring about an introduction between us.

Accordingly, the next evening we met at his houſe: dangerous, indeed, as he prophecied

cied was the meeting. All the feminine graces ſeemed to wait around her, and there was magic in her voice. From this evening we became conſtant companions: if our rambles commenced not together, they were ſure at leaſt to end ſo; for, while with her, my time only paſſed pleaſantly.

In the midſt of ſtrangers, my heart had long experienced a melancholy void, which ſhe now filled up.

The fervor of friendſhip I had already known; but it was left to her to inſpire me with the tenderneſs of love.

On a ſudden ſhe entirely ſhunned me: in vain I called; in vain I wandered round the cottage; ſhe remained inviſible; and I, at length, became ſo wretched, from her conduct, which was unaccountable to me, that I reſolved rather to run the riſk of diſpleaſing her, than not try to obtain an

ex-

explanation of it. Accordingly, one evening I entered the cottage abruptly, notwithſtanding the reſiſtance of her ſervant, and finding her in the parlour, demanded, with warmth, the reaſon of her altered conduct.

She bluſhed—ſhe ſighed—and, after ſome little heſitation, informed me, the alteration I complained of, proceeded from a dread of incurring the cenſure of the world, which, ſhe well knew, the privacy of her ſituation would not guard her from, if ſhe gave the leaſt cauſe for it.

"Let us then," I exclaimed, "act in ſuch a manner as to give no reaſon for it; let our deſtinies be united, and let us, by mutual tenderneſs and affection, endeavour to make up for the deficiencies of fortune. My heart is ſolely yours; this cottage, while you are its miſtreſs, will, to me be preferable to a palace; the luxuries of life

are

are beyond our power, but its comforts are within our reach; they are all we desire; they are all that yield real felicity."

She hesitated to reply to my proposal; but it was a hesitation which did not appear to result from indifference, but generosity; from a fear of involving me in difficulties, by acceding to it, and undoubtedly it endeared her still more to me.

I at length conquered her scruples; and in a day or two we were united in the village church.

A fortnight after our marriage, she asked me one morning, whether I intended we should always remain in our present situation? "for," continued she, "if such is your intention, we had better have the benefit of reclusion, by taking some holy order upon us, and turning professed recluses."—I stared at her with utter astonishment;

ment; and could ſcarcely believe it was Julia ſpoke, who had ſo often painted, in glowing colours, as the happieſt that could be led, a life of paſtoral felicity.

She ſoon, however, gave me to underſtand ſhe never would ſubmit to remain in our preſent retirement; "which," continued ſhe, "may do very well for the old and ugly; but when heaven has been ſo kind as to give us youth and beauty, I ſee no reaſon for not enjoying life; which really, amongſt gabbling ruſtics, and wild goats, it is utterly impoſſible to do."

Irritated and amazed, I left her in ſilence; but with a certain preſentiment that I had been totally deceived, and that my happineſs was as tranſient as the gay ſkirtings of a ſummer's cloud.

From an unpleaſant meditation I was roufed, by a meſſenger from the village inn,

inn, who informed me, that a gentleman had juſt arrived there, who wiſhed to ſee me. I haſtened to it; and, on entering the parlour, a young man flung himſelf into my arms; and, in articulating my name, made me inſtantly recognize Pelham. But, oh! how different from the Pelham I had left! no longer glowing with youth and animation, but ſinking beneath illneſs and dejection. On the receipt of my letter he reſolved to return to England, certain that the unreſtrained effuſions of friendſhip would be a conſolation to him. After the emotions cauſed by our meeting had a little ſubſided, he related to me the particulars I already knew, and ended his diſtreſſing narrative by aſſuring me he utterly deſpiſed the faithleſs woman who had ſo ungratefully repaid his love; and who, from a ſituation almoſt indigent, he had elevated to affluence and elegance.

"But how deceitful is the human heart?" continued this admirable young man, "and how few can bear extremes of either kind! She fell from the ſummit I hoped ſhe would adorn, and in her fall demoliſhed all my plans of felicity. 'Tis true I abhor her principles, yet I cannot utterly hate her; nay, I ſometimes pity her, particularly, ſince my declining health has warned me of my impending fate. The world recedes from my view; I can find no pleaſure in it; and ſeem an awful proof of the inſufficiency of riches to procure happineſs. In the preſumption of youth, I thought myſelf ſecure from misfortune; but am now, alas! fatally convinced, that ſorrow, though in various ways, all the children of men are liable to."

In this hour of mingled pain and pleaſure, I acquainted him with my ſituation; and

and inſiſted on his making my cottage his abode, truſting the ſalubrity of the air, joined to the tender attentions I ſhould then have the power of paying him, might be of ſervice to his declining health.

He was delighted with the view of my dwelling. "Happy Howard," ſaid he, as, leaning on my arm, he ſlowly approached it, "your domeſtic peace gives me a pleaſure nothing elſe could yield; long may it continue after the period when I ſhall no more behold it!"

His ſolemnity affected my ſpirits. I hoped the gaiety of my wife (for gay, indeed, I now believed her to be) would exhilarate him. I led him to the parlour where ſhe ſat; but how great was my horror on beholding her ſtart wildly from her chair, the moment he entered it, while he, ſinking upon my ſhoulder, exclaimed,

"Gracious heaven! can it be poſſible! the cruel, perfidious betrayer of my honour, the wife of Howard!"

His words revealed a fatal ſecret: no language can give any adequate idea of the anguiſh and deſpair with which I was ſeized; all my tenderneſs and admiration for her who was the occaſion of ſuch wretchedneſs to both, was inſtantly converted into hatred, contempt, and deteſtation, which time, inſtead of diminiſhing has rather increaſed.

I know not what act of deſperation paſſions, naturally impetuous, might have tempted me to commit, had not Pelham, by his mild reaſoning, allayed the tempeſt of my ſoul.

The wretched bane of our repoſe had, ſoon after her divorce, been abandoned by her paramour; ſo tranſient is the duration of

of love when embittered by guilt, haunted by remorſe, and founded alone on the fleeting baſis of external admiration!

Under the aſſumed character of a widow, ſhe then retired to the remote village I had choſen for a retreat, till time had a little deadened the rumour of her infamy, and enabled her to form a plan for her re-entrance into life.

On me ſhe quickly perceived the impreſſion ſhe had made; and, as my wife, hoped in ſome meaſure to be re-eſtabliſhed in the opinion of the world. The idea of living another hour with her after the diſcovery that had taken place, inſpired me with horror. I accordingly divided my fortune with her, and we parted for ever.

Her unexpected appearance and ſituation gave a ſhock to my friend, which haſtened his diſſolution. Even at this moment I

tremble to recollect my ſufferings at the period in which Heaven took him to itſelf.

Pure, noble, diſintereſted, he fell an early victim to deceit. He requeſted I would ſee him interred in the Abbey by the Hamlet, which had been the burying-place of many of his family. With this requeſt I religiouſly complied. The gloom, and, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, magnificent deſolation of the ſolitary ruin, ſuited (as Zanga ſays) "the gloomy habit of my ſoul."

When I looked forward to the future, all was a dreary void: I felt as if I had no intereſt in life; and thought the ruined walls of the Abbey would be a ſafe retreat from thoſe envenomed ſhafts which perfidy and malice ſo frequently point againſt innocence and ſenſibility. Here, "the world forgetting, and by the world forgot," Belmore diſcovered me: he came as the miniſtering

niſtering ſpirit of benevolence: he reaſoned againſt the aſperity and miſanthropy which were daily gaining ground upon my diſpoſition, and gave to me an internal wretchedneſs almoſt impoſſible to bear. He argued with me on the duty, the ſubmiſſion, due from a rational creature to the will of his Creator, without whoſe permiſſion, neither good nor evil could befall us, and who juſtly expected gratitude for his mercies, and reſignation under his inflictions.

Conviction and comfort attended his words. I reſolved to exert myſelf to conquer the gloomineſs of deſpair; but his arguments would not have made me relinquiſh my retreat, had they not been aided by a powerful motive; a motive which, hidden in the receſſes of my heart, ſhall never be revealed.

A ſhort time ago the fatal cauſe of my ſorrows diſcovered my retreat, and ob-

truded herſelf upon me. Miſtreſs of conſummate art, ſhe hoped to tempt me to a reconciliation by a ſhow of penitence and grief; but againſt all her blandiſhments I was proof, and ſo ſtrongly expreſſed my abhorrence of her, that ſhe left me with all the malignity of rage. Her view, in wiſhing to live with me, was to be introduced again with ſome degree of credit to the world.

Pelham, my unfortunate friend, bequeathed to me all in his power to beſtow; more than was needed by him who, like himſelf, was convinced of the inſufficiency of riches to procure happineſs.

The regiment I am about joining, will ſhortly be ordered to foreign quarters: I may not live to return with it to my native country; let me, therefore, uſe the preſent opportunity of aſſuring you my beſt wiſhes, to the laſt moment of my exiſtence,

will

will be for the happineſs of Belmore, and his adopted child.

Kind, compaſſionate Belmore, adieu!—lovely Matilda, ſweet poſſeſſor of every excellence, farewel! may thy pure ſoul never be wounded by vice, nor thy gentle ſpirit bowed down by affliction; and may that good you both delight in diſtributing, be three-fold returned unto you! As I raiſe my eyes from the paper, I behold your cottage—the bright ſun illuminates the windows—the trees gently wave around it, and the herds ſport joyfully on the flowery paſture before it. I gaze on it with anguiſh, as if my laſt glance at earthly felicity: the idea of no more beholding it, of no more receiving conſolation from its inmates, that conſolation which has been ſuch balm to my lacerated heart, totally ſubdues me.—I cannot continue the ſubject—adieu, and ſometimes think of me!

CHAP. VI.

" Unconſcious of her power, and turning quick
" With unaffected bluſhes from his gaze,
" He ſaw her charming; but he ſaw not half
" The charms her downcaſt modeſty conceal'd "

THOMSON.

" THINK on thee!" cried Matilda, with a flood of tears, " Ah! Howard, never can you be forgotten: your misfortunes will be to me a conſtant ſource of regret; and, could wiſhes avail, the ſeverity of thy fate would ſoon be ſoftened."

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From the ſoft luxury of grief ſhe was interrupted by Patty Hillgrove, who, hearing ſhe was alone, came to invite her to ſpend the day at the farm; but Matilda begged to be excuſed.

"Lord! now," ſays Patty, "why can't you come? I am ſure it would be better than poring here at home by yourſelf; beſides, we have a charming day for rambling about, and father is ſo fond of you, I know he will let me walk as much as I pleaſe, if you are my companion; elſe he would ſcold me for being idle, for he is always wanting me to work as if I were an old grandam. But is it true that poor Mr. Howard has left the Hamlet entirely?" "I believe ſo," ſaid Matilda, in a low and heſitating voice.—"Dear me! how very low-ſpirited you ſeem, Miſs Matilda! (cried Patty,

looking earneſtly at her) and now I perceive your eyes are quite red; but that I ſuppoſe is owing to your having got cold." This ſpeech of Patty's overſpread Matilda's face with bluſhes; and, perceiving the interpretation this ſly girl was likely to put upon her reſolution of continuing at home, ſhe conſented to accompany her; and putting on her hat and cloak, they proceeded to the farm.

In their way thither a gentleman attended by two ſervants on horſeback, in rich liveries, met them. He ſtopped his horſe to let them paſs; and gazing ſlightly at Patty, his eyes faſtened on Matilda, and an involuntary exclamation of, "By heaven—an angel!" eſcaped him.

Patty, who took this compliment to herſelf, immediately ſlackened her pace, not a little delighted at attracting his notice.—

Matilda,

Matilda, however, haſtened forward, and opening the little wicket which led to the houſe, her companion, with reluctant ſteps, was obliged to follow her, giving the ſtranger, however, a moſt courteous and inviting glance.

They found Hillgrove in the parlour, ſeated at his deſk, ſettling ſome accounts: —" Lord!" ſaid Patty, in a whiſper to Matilda, and ſlyly winking at her, " I wiſh father was out of this, we ſhould have ſuch fine fun, then for —— See how the gentleman has rode back to the houſe, and ſtopped juſt beſide the gate." " Who is that," ſaid Hillgrove, " you are giggling and gaping at? I wonder you aint aſhamed to be always at the window or flirting about the roads?"—" Lord! let us come and walk, Miſs Matilda," ſaid ſhe. " No," replied Matilda, " the ſun is too warm at preſent,

it will be much pleaſanter to defer our walk till evening." She then took her work-bag and began her netting. "Aye, aye," cried Hillgrove, taking off his ſpectacles and putting up his papers, "I like to ſee girls induſtrious: why now, Patty would never deſire any thing elſe than dreſs herſelf and walk about. Egad, I wonder girls who act ſo, can ever expect to get married." Patty at laſt, by her geſtures, attracted the ſole attention of her father, and drew him to the window. Here he began to lecture her ſeverely, and was driving her away, when ſhe exclaimed, "Lord! father, how could I prevent the gentleman from following me? beſides, how can you tell but what he may be ſome perſon on buſineſs, who does not know the houſe?" "Adad," ſaid he, ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, "ſo he may be, ſure enough. This is the 'Squire, I dare ſay that

that farmer Gwynn ſaid would be here to-day, to look at the bay-horſes: let me go out to him," ſaid he, adjuſting his wig—"let me paſs; they were never in better trim to be ſhown." Away he ſtumped, and, opening the gate, aſked the ſtranger, "if he was not 'Squire Fenton come to purchaſe his bay horſes?" "No, Sir," ſaid the gentleman: then pauſing for a few moments, as if contriving ſome ſcheme, he ſaid, "but, faith, it is lucky enough your mentioning thoſe horſes—I have long wanted ſuch a pair as you deſcribe for my phaëton, and if you have no objection, will ſtep in and look at them."

The farmer immediately aſſured him he was extremely welcome to ſee them.

He then alighted, and walked forward with Hillgrove. "I ſuppoſe," ſaid he, "it is to you immaterial who purchaſes them?"

them!" "Aye, that it is," replied the farmer; "the beſt bidder with me, is always the ſure winner. But come along, they are as ſleek as a lady's ſkin, and as bright as a looking-glaſs." He then conducted him to the ſtable: the ſtranger admired, or pretended to admire the horſes exceedingly, and the following morning promiſed he would call and make a poſitive agreement about them. He then began to look about the farm, ſaid it was a very ſnug place, and aſked many queſtions about his ſtock.

"You have gotten two pretty laſſes for your daughters," ſaid he, "who, in my opinion, are better than all the live ſtock on the farm." "Aye, bleſs your heart," exclaimed the farmer, "I have but one, and ſhe is enough in all conſcience: why I have more trouble with her, than in breaking a colt; girls are ſo ſkittiſh, and take ſo badly to the curb."

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The ſtranger laughed, and, pretending fatigue, was invited in to reſt and refreſh himſelf.

Patty, who had watched all their motions, was in extacy. On ſeeing him approach the parlour, ſhe ran to the glaſs, adjuſted her cap and hat, and drawing up her head, put on her beſt ſmiles to receive the handſome ſtranger. By her reception of him, he inſtantly concluded ſhe was the miſtreſs of the manſion. To his ſalutations Matilda only bowed, and continued working. All the delicacies of the larder were ſoon produced, with a bottle of gooſeberry wine, and ſome fine old ale. Neither his entertainment, nor his entertainers, however, were regarded by the ſtranger: his whole attention was engroſſed by Matilda; and the ardent admiration with which he viewed her, at laſt ſtruck Patty,

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and filled her with envy and diſappointment; nor could ſhe forbear wondering how he could prefer ſuch a pale, ſilent, humdrum thing as Matilda, to ſuch a ſmart, chatty, roſy-faced girl as herſelf: yet ſo it was, and ſcarcely could ſhe conceal the chagrin the diſcovery excited.

The farmer being called to his labourers, made an uncouth apology to his gueſt for leaving him only with the girls: the ſtranger received it with much good humour, aſſuring him next morning he would conclude the bargain about the horſes.

He then advanced to Matilda, and, with that air of familiarity which ſo frequently is aſſumed by men of the world, when conſcious they are in company with inferiors, took her hand: "You are," ſaid he, the prettieſt ſilent girl I ever ſaw; but I ſuppoſe you well know that a charming face,

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without the aid of language, is powerful enough to ſubdue."

"The converſation, Sir," (ſaid ſhe, gravely, and withdrawing her hand) "of people who, for the firſt, and probably the laſt time, have met, can be of little conſequence to each other."

"Why," cried he, "do you not live with the good folks of this farm?" "No, Sir."—"Where then?" exclaimed he: "upon my ſoul you have charmed me; and I would fly with delight to the world's end to pay my *devoirs* at your ſhrine." Matilda now turned entirely from him, and reſumed her work. Thus repulſed, he addreſſed himſelf to Patty; but the ſunſhine of her countenance was quite o'ercaſt: and when, in a half-whiſper, he aſked where her little proud friend lived, ſhe anſwered, in a ſulky manner, "Indeed I ſhan't tell you!"

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He now perceived he was quite miſtaken in his politics: ſo, like a wiſe general, he was reſolved for the preſent to retreat, till a new plan of attack was concerted: aſſuming, therefore, an air of greater reſpect, he bowed to the ladies and retired.

The harmony of the day, however, was interrupted by his means. Patty was too much vexed by his neglect, to pay any attention to Matilda; who, left again to her own meditations, ſunk into her former dejection; and, in reflecting on recent events, found a painful ſadneſs gathering round her heart which ſhe could not diſpel. Soon after dinner, Belmore came to the farm: he returned home much earlier than was expected, and knew he ſhould agreeably ſurpriſe Matilda by coming to her.

Immediately after tea they bade the Hillgroves adieu; and as the evening was un-

uncommonly fine, and Belmore not in the leaſt fatigued, they ſauntered about the beautiful environs of the Hamlet.

"Poor Howard!" cried he, "his dejection increaſed every mile we proceeded." The duties of his profeſſion will, I truſt, have ſome effect upon him, and, by diſſipating his thoughts, prevent him from perpetually brooding over the cauſe of his affliction:—he is indeed a fine fellow; and, as I liſtened to his expreſſions, the ebullitions of a woe-fraught heart, I could ſcarce refrain exclaiming, like Ophelia, "What a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" "Noble, indeed," Matilda would have ſaid, but a ſigh ſtifled her words. She recovered herſelf, however, in a few moments, and mentioned the manuſcript he had put into her hands. "True," ſaid Belmore, "I now recollect his hinting ſomething of the kind; but I did

did not perfectly underſtand him: his words indeed were unconnected, and he ſeemed loſt in ſorrow." He then aſked her if ſhe had read it. She bluſhed as ſhe informed him ſhe had, and was beginning to apologize for not waiting till his return; but he interrupted her, declaring he could not wonder at her impatience to learn the motives of Howard's myſterious conduct. After a few queſtions, and liſtening to the comments ſhe had now the power of making on it, he changed the ſubject of diſcourſe, and chatted on other matters.

Abſorbed in an intereſting converſation, they wandered about till the moon, full orbed, with a more pleaſing light, ſhadowy ſet off the face of things, and they found themſelves by the Abbey, Howard's late ſolitary abode.

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They ſtopped almoſt involuntarily before it. "Awful pile!" cried Belmore, "thy deſolation and decay chills even the ſoul of cheerfulneſs; on a heart of ſorrow then how great muſt have been thy influence!"

Matilda had never examined the building; he aſked her if ſhe had now any inclination to do ſo?—it was the very thing ſhe wiſhed. A romantic tenderneſs was diffuſed throughout her mind, perfectly adapted to the ſolemn ſcene.

He led her through the ruined gate; the dark arch-way to the cloiſters of the Abbey, at the termination of which were the apartments Howard had ſlightly fitted up for his accommodation: they were barely tenantable; ſurrounded every where by images of ruin, broken pillars, and mouldering walls; which nature, as if to conceal the ravages

ravages of time, had partly overſpread with a luxuriant foliage of ivy.

The chapel was diſunited from the body of the ſtructure by decay; it was more than half unroofed; and gleams of moonlight gave a full view of all its ſculptures and inſcriptions.

The great altar was yet entire: Matilda gazed upon it with reverential awe: ſhe felt "a ſacred terror, a ſevere delight creep through her mortal frame," as ſhe traverſed the lonely aiſles, and viewed the mouldering tombs of thoſe who had once been inhabitants of the place. Here, in a mental ejaculation, ſhe beſought heaven to aſſuage the ſorrows of the wretched Howard.

A white flag lay before the altar, which, Belmore informed her, covered the remains of Howard's friend. Fancy in a moment pictured

pictured the young and unfortunate Pelham to her view.

"He was good," said she to herself; "he is now happy—he is at peace: no more can perfidy or ingratitude stab his breast. Yet, (cried she, as tears streamed down her cheeks) such is the weakness of human nature, we cannot help lamenting the decease of the noble, the youthful, the humane."

On the wall opposite this flag, she perceived some words roughly engraved, which as she read, she instantly conjectured were Howard's, alluding to the death of his friend.—They were to this purpose:

> In the prime of manhood, the possession of riches, the exercise of virtue, he fell; fell even as a flower of the field, untimely nipped by desolating winds. The gate of death, through which he passed, may shortly be opened for me: this reflexion is my chief consolation; happy are the slumbers of the grave! blessed are those who, ignorant of great offences, depart in hopes of an hereafter!

The emotions of Matilda were now too powerful for ſuppreſſion; her ſobs drew Mr. Belmore to her. He took her hand, and leading her out, "My child," ſaid he, "this overpowers you; 'tis the children of levity, and not diſpoſitions like yours, that require ſuch an awful leſſon as this ſcene preſents."

The ground around the chapel was yet uſed for a burying-place for many of the neighbouring rural families. The graves were now almoſt all ornamented with garlands of flowers, by the village maids, as tributes of affection and reſpect to their departed friends.

A ſoft breeze gently agitated the tall old trees; and the rooks, their long unmoleſted tenants, now broke the ſtillneſs of the night.

Matilda could have ſtaid for hours in this ſpot, ſo congenial was its awful gloom to the

the preſent feelings of her ſoul. But Belmore, who perceived the depreſſion of her ſpirits, hurried her home, where ſitting down to a ſimple repaſt, he ſtrove, by fond careſſes, and ſoothing language, to revive her wonted cheerfulneſs, but in vain. Diſtreſſed that ſhe could not now appear as he wiſhed to ſee her, ſhe pleaded an headach as an excuſe, for leaving him abruptly; and having put Howard's manuſcript into his hands, retired for the night.

CHAP. VII.

" A change ſo ſwift what heart did ever feel!
" It ruſh'd upon me like a mighty ſtream,
" And bore me in a moment far from ſhore!
" I've lov'd away myſelf in one ſhort hour;
" Already I am gone an age of paſſion."

DRYDEN.

WE ſhall now introduce to notice, the ſtranger mentioned in the foregoing chapter. His name was Hartland; he was a particular friend of Aſhmore's, to whom he was going on a viſit when he met Matilda.

He

He was paſt the prime of life, but a remarkable handſome figure made him appear much younger than he really was: he ſtill retained all the ardour of youth, united to thoſe ſolid acquirements, which are ſeldom attained but by a long and intimate knowledge of the world; and was at once an entertaining and inſinuating companion.

But though he too often practiſed thoſe vices which the faſhionable part of mankind ſtyle gaieties, he was yet capable of admiring real purity; and often declared, could he meet with a woman who anſwered his ideas of female perfection, he would commence Benedict, and retire to his woods and waterfalls to enjoy domeſtic felicity.

Proud, paſſionate, and vindictive, he was yet generous; and, where he profeſſed a friendſhip, really ſincere. He could in a laughable manner, without the appearance

of the leaſt ill-nature, expoſe the foibles of others, while he ſlyly concealed his own.

His fortune gave him ample power to gratify his propenſity to pleaſure. He poſſeſſed a large eſtate in England, and, in right of his mother, a ſmaller one in Ireland.

He had been a pupil of Aſhmore's, and had the higheſt veneration for him as a primitive character, in whom was no guile. He generally, in the courſe of every two or three years, paid a ſhort viſit to him.

Of an unuſual length he now thought it probable his viſit might be. The beauty of Matilda had excited his warmeſt admiration; and notwithſtanding her coldneſs, he flattered himſelf he ſhould ſoon find her more acceſſible.

What his intentions were concerning her, he himſelf did not know: he left it to time and chance to determine them.

Soon

Soon after breakfaſt the enſuing morning he ordered his phaëton, and leaving Aſhmore inhis library, rode over to Hillgrove's. The farmer was impatiently waiting his arrival:—the bargain for the bay horſes was ſoon concluded, and his groom ordered to take them to a neighbouring inn.

Hillgrove wanted to know who he was, where he came from, and his general reſidence; but receiving no anſwer to theſe queſtions, and having no more bargains to make, he deemed any further attention to him quite unneceſſary, and marched off to his labourers. The moment he departed, Patty, who had been watching all their motions, ran to the gate, and invited Mr. Hartland (juſt as he was aſcending his phaëton) into the parlour, to take ſome refreſhment; flattering herſelf, as Matilda was abſent, ſhe might now have a chance of

charming him. Mr. Hartland ſaw through her motives for this invitation, and readily accepted it, in hopes of diſcovering the habitation of her lovely friend: but Patty was here as ſly as himſelf; and finding he could not obtain from her the ſatisfaction he required, he ſhortly grew tired of her company, and bade her adieu.

He ſoon diſmounted from his phaëton, and rambled about the cottages; but though he ſaw blue eyes and roſy cheeks innumerable, he no where beheld the beautiful face he ſought.

Tired and diſappointed, he returned to the Parſonage.—After dinner, Aſhmore aſked him if he was diſpoſed for a ramble? —"If you are," cried he, "I will promiſe you ſuch a treat, as perhaps you may not often meet with." Hartland, at a loſs for amuſement, conſented to accompany him

in

in the propoſed ramble, and they accordingly proceeded to Belmore's cottage. Its neatneſs and ſimplicity excited Hartland's admiration; but he was ſtill more pleaſed with the manners of its maſter, whom they found in the parlour.—"Where," aſked Aſhmore, after the compliments of introduction were over, "is my little favourite?—You know my viſits, in reality, are always to her.—" "Wooing the zephyrs in the garden," replied Belmore:—he then led the way to it.

Matilda was ſitting in the ſhady receſs: ſhe was reading; and ſo intently engaged by her book, ſhe heard not the approaching viſitors till they were juſt by her.

The ſurpriſe and delight of Hartland on beholding her, cannot be expreſſed--ſcarcely could he conceal them. A glowing bluſh mantled her cheeks on his introduction to

her: his firſt addreſs ſhe had conſidered extremely free; but ſhe was now led to impute it to a little unſeaſonable gaiety; and as a compliment to Mr. Aſhmore, who ſhe truly eſteemed, ſhe received his friend with the utmoſt ſweetneſs and affability. The tea equipage, by their deſire, was brought to the receſs. The converſation was general; and Hartland gazed and liſtened with new rapture: Matilda's voice was harmony itſelf; that voice now delivered ſentiments replete with benevolence and candour, and which evinced a brilliant underſtanding, highly cultivated.

The unaffected elegance of her manner, the graces which appeared in every look and motion, faſcinated his ſoul, and engroſſed all his attention.

After tea, Mr. Aſhmore ſaid, "You muſt now, my dear girl, render perfect the treat I pro-

I promiſed Mr. Hartland this evening, and which by his eyes I can eaſily ſee he would wiſh repeated." "Yes," ſaid Hartland, "ſince I muſt ever think the ſight of beauty and elegance the moſt delicious treat a man of ſenſibility can receive. But take care, my good Doctor, you have not brought me to an entertainment which will give me a diſreliſh for all others!"

The Parſon ſmiled, and led Matilda to the parlour, where he entreated her to ſit down to her piano.—She made it a conſtant rule, to the extent of her abilities, to amuſe Mr. Belmore's friends: ſhe, therefore, inſtantly complied with his requeſt. Her voice was not powerful, but its ſweetneſs fully compenſated for its want of ſtrength; it was a ſweetneſs which grave a thrilling pleaſure to the heart.

Hartland was paſſionately fond of muſic, and liſtened to her with rapt attention.

After a few ſongs, ſhe roſe and joined the reſt of the party in rambling about the cottage; the old gentlemen ſauntering before her and Hartland. The converſation between the latter turned on a paſtoral life, and its ſimple avocations. He aſked, whether ſhe had ever been in the metropolis? "No," ſaid ſhe, "nor do I now deſire ever to viſit it: I am ſatisfied with my preſent ſituation: a change of ſcene might perhaps produce a change of ſentiments; much I ſhould there behold would be beyond my power of attaining, and to wiſh in vain muſt be moſt painful."

"True," ſaid Hartland; "to ſigh in vain for ſome pleaſures, and ſome objects, would to me, at leaſt, be attended with deſpair. —Yet," continued he after a pauſe, "you I can never think deſtined to obſcurity," —"Was ſuch my deſtination, however," cried Matilda, "I ſhould not regret it, ſince the

the ſhade of life has ever been allowed the happieſt."—They were now come to a thicket of roſes, where Hartland, in the eagerneſs of diſcourſe, ſtopped.--The flower-ſeaſon was nearly over.

Amongſt the few roſes which remained, was one uncommonly beautiful, almoſt hid by the boughs. "Why don't you pull it?" aſked Hartland. "I think it a pity," cried Matilda, "it ſhould in a few moments periſh merely for my gratification." "Is it not a greater pity," he exclaimed, "it ſhould die in obſcurity? Yes," ſaid he, looking at Matilda, "ſuch a lovely flower was never deſtined

——— "To bloom unſeen,
"And waſte its ſweetneſs in the deſert air."

Matilda bluſhed: ſhe perceived he applied the words to her; and ſhe turned from him to avoid his penetrating looks.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

" Oh! ſhe's all ſoftneſs!
" ——— and calm as a rock'd infant;
" ———
" She is the child of love, and ſhe was born in ſmiles."

LEE'S ALEXANDER.

HARTLAND treated Matilda with a reſpect he had never before paid to her ſex. —Awed by the dignity of her manner, and the penetrating expreſſion of her eyes, he durſt not addreſs her with his uſual levity. He never before had been ſo charmed: he now

now ſaw beauty devoid of affectation, and ſimplicity dignified by ſenſe; and the admiration he had conceived on firſt ſeeing her, was heightened into the moſt violent paſſion.

On his return to the Parſonage, he heard from Aſhmore her hiſtory. The old man, who adored her, dwelt with rapture on her praiſe, and heard his gueſt's impaſſioned expreſſions with delight. Had Hartland been a profeſſed libertine, he no doubt would have regretted finding the object of his admiration ſo protected, and fortified both by principle and education, to reſiſt his inſidious ſchemes.

Such, however, was not his character. I had before ſaid, he had often expreſsed an inclination for a domeſtic life: he now beheld a woman, with whom ſuch a life could be enjoyed in its utmoſt purity. His large

fortune;

fortune; his manners, which, when he pleaſed, he could render irreſiſtibly pleaſing; and his perſon, which he knew was handſome; all inſpired him with a certainty of being accepted with pleaſure by a girl who depended on bounty for her ſupport.

His viſits now became conſtant at the cottage; and in the courſe of a few days, not only he, but its inhabitants, felt as if he had been an acquaintance of ſome time.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

" I ſee 'tis love diſturbs thy mind,
" And wiſh to give thee reſt."

WATKINS.

THE ſadneſs of Matilda at laſt caught the attention of Belmore, and filled him with the crueleſt alarms. The tranſient cheerfulneſs which ſhe forced herſelf to aſſume in the preſence of ſtrangers, he ſaw was but a veil to hide the real feelings of her heart:

—the

—the cauſe of her dejection he could too eaſily divine. Whenever Howard was mentioned, he ſaw ſhe became violently agitated; while crimſon bluſhes o'erſpread her face, and, in faultering accents, ſhe endeavoured to change the ſubject of diſcourſe, as if afraid of dwelling on it.

He knew the rectitude of her heart; but he alſo knew its tenderneſs, and the conſequent ills that were likely to reſult from an hopeleſs paſſion.

From the purity of her principles, he eaſily conjectured what the conflicts of her mind were at the idea of entertaining an improper attachment; and much feared they would end in the utter demolition of her peace and health.

What he ſuffered on her account is impoſſible to expreſs. He had cheriſhed her as the comfort of his days, the laſt hope of his

his life; and the ſorrow which afflicted her, overwhelmed him with anguiſh. The aſſiduities of Hartland at this critical juncture gave him much pleaſure. He had received a moſt amiable character of him from Aſhmore, who aſſured him he had long been ſeeking for a woman of elegance and worth to unite his deſtiny to.

Such a woman, the impaſſioned language of Hartland's eyes now declared he had found. Matilda's mind was open to reaſon; and Belmore truſted, by convincing her of the advantages of ſuch a connexion, ſhe would be prevailed on to accept the addreſſes of Hartland; whoſe worth, attention, and diſintereſted affection, he truſted would overcome her unfortunate prepoſſeſſion. By thus diverting her thoughts to another ſource, and impoſing new duties upon her, Belmore hoped ſhe might be preſerved

ſerved from the pangs of an ill-fated attachment: he encouraged thoſe hopes; he dwelt on them with pleaſure; thus leſſening the preſent evil by anticipations of future good. Though the company of Hartland often afforded entertainment to Matilda, it yet more frequently oppreſſed her, by preventing her from ſeeking that ſolitude, to which a heart burthened by a ſadneſs it durſt not communicate, naturally flies for relief.

She walked out one afternoon, determined to call on Patty, and endeavour to prevent her ideas from rambling on forbidden ſubjects; but one glance at the old Abbey, as ſhe turned a lane, fruſtrated this reſolution, and ſhe haſtened to it with a melancholy pleaſure.—She entered the room Howard had occupied: as ſhe ſtood at the window in a meditating attitude, her buſy fancy retraced

every

every ſcene ſhe had gone through ſince her arrival at the Hamlet. The laſt words of Howard recurred to her memory: "he bid me remember him," ſaid ſhe; "alas! why do I ſo faithfully obey him?" She thought with horror on the diſaſtrous fate which had united him to a wretch who had blaſted the honour and life of his friend; nor did ſhe wonder at the impreſſion it made on a ſoul of warmth and ſenſibility, ſuch as he poſſeſſed. Had he been free, ſhe could not miſconſtrue his words: incoherent as they often were, they yet plainly declared his feelings for her. To his other misfortunes were now added the pangs of hopeleſs love: a tear fell from her at the idea, and ſhe frequently wiſhed, for both their ſakes, they had never met.

Thus engaged, ſhe heard not the foot-ſteps of any one approaching; and was con-

conſequently not only ſurpriſed, but embarraſſed, by ſeeing Hartland ſuddenly before her. He had called at the cottage; and being informed ſhe was gone to Hillgrove's, thither he went in purſuit of her; and was much diſappointed at not finding her there. Patty, not a little mortified by the chagrin he expreſſed, with a ſcornful toſs of her head, exclaimed, "No, truly, ſhe ſeldom honours us with viſits; but you will find her, in all likelihood, at the Abbey!"

Thus directed, he purſued and diſcovered our heroine, who ſtarted in the utmoſt confuſion and ſurpriſe at his voice. "Good heaven!" ſaid he, "what a ſpot for youth and beauty! Why a ſkull and croſs-bones would make this a perfect apartment for a Caliſta. Except to do penance for all the miſchief you have committed, I cannot conceive

conceive what brings you hither, for I muſt hope you have no gallant gay Lothario to lament."

"No, indeed," cried ſhe, "nor ſhould I lament ſuch an object." "The gentle Altamont," ſaid he "is perhaps more ſuited to your taſte; he whoſe ardent love, not ſlights, not inſults could ſubdue:—ſuch is the nature of a real paſſion: I feel it from experience."

"We had better return to the cottage," ſaid Matilda. "You would not have been in ſuch haſte to return to it," ſaid he, reproachfully, "if I had not joined you! Oh! Miſs Stanley, why theſe averted eyes? Why this repulſive coldneſs?—Aſſure me that your heart is another's, and I will endeavour to force mine from dwelling on your perfections: but without ſuch an aſſurance, I muſt ſtill hope, ſtill love, adore, entreat."

In

In much confuſion Matilda would have paſſed him, but he prevented her, by catching her hand. "You muſt not fly me thus," he exclaimed; "the anguiſh occaſioned by my preſent ſuſpenſe, compels me to ſpeak thus abruptly; compels me to——"

"Mr. Hartland," ſaid Matilda, interrupting him, "our acquaintance has been too ſhort to authoriſe your ſpeaking in this manner;—your declarations are more the effuſions of gaiety than ſincerity." "No," ſaid he vehemently, "by heaven they are ſincere! I admired you from the firſt moment I ſaw you. You appeared indeed ſo beautiful, I imagined I ſhould not have found you far removed from weakneſs: the idea you may deem illiberal; but hitherto I had found beauty either debaſed by folly or affectation, and concluded it would

would be ſtill the caſe; you proved a lovely exception, and my heart, in doing you homage, only did you juſtice."

"Let me paſs, Mr. Hartland," ſaid Matilda, "I inſiſt upon your letting me return home; and if you wiſh to oblige me, change the ſubject of diſcourſe."

He no longer detained her, but did not permit her to return alone, and by his profound ſilence ſeemed deeply meditating ſome ſcheme. Matilda hoped her looks and words had mortified his pride in ſuch a manner, that ſhe ſhould not again be tormented by his profeſſions. They found Belmore walking in the lawn. Matilda was too much agitated to enter into converſation with him: ſhe ſaid her walk had fatigued her, and ſhe would retire to the houſe to reſt herſelf; ſhe accordingly went to her room, leaving Belmore and Harland together;

little thinking of the advantage the latter would take of her abſence.

She ſat by an open window, enjoying the delightful ſerenity and coolneſs which accompanies twilight, and unheeding the unuſual length of time which elapſed ere ſhe was ſummoned to ſupper. On entering the parlour, Mr. Belmore, with eyes which denoted pleaſure, took her hand, and leading her to a chair, ſeated himſelf by her, exclaiming, "Heaven, my Matilda, has heard the prayers I offered up on your account, and has now given to me a proſpect of beholding you ſettled as I could wiſh." Matilda had no power to reply: a ſecret forboding ſhot through her ſoul.—"Hartland," continued he, "has made for you the moſt generous propoſals. He has informed me he ſpoke to you on the ſubject, and received no rejection."

"Heavens!"

"Heavens!" ſaid Matilda, "is it poſſible he could ſo baſely pretend to misinterpret my words? Had he made a poſitive propoſal, I ſhould have given a poſitive rejection to it."

"And why reject him?" ſaid Belmore, "Hartland poſſeſſes every requiſite to pleaſe; and to a heart diſengaged, could not fail of being acceptable." Something like a feeling of conſcious guilt pervaded the heart of Matilda; at theſe words, ſhe bluſhed, ſhe trembled, and unable to bear the looks of Belmore, averted her head. He ſaw her agitation, with pity he ſaw it, aware as he was of the feelings which cauſed it; but this pity could not induce him to give up a plan, which in the end he firmly believed would conſtitue her happineſs. This, he truſted, was the hour of perſuaſion, and he endeavoured to collect his

ſpirits, in order to be better enabled to perſevere in the cauſe he had undertaken. He remained ſilent till Matilda was able to ſpeak: at laſt, recovering, ſhe ſaid, "I have no wiſh beyond that of continuing with you; I can experience no felicity equal to that which is derived from your love and protection."

"Alas! my child," he exclaimed, "life at the beſt is precarious; in the courſe of human nature I cannot reckon upon many years; to ſee you provided for, ere I quit this world, is my moſt fervent wiſh. Did you know the many anxious hours I have ſpent in looking forward to the period when I ſhould leave you unprotected—leave ſo much innocence and beauty expoſed to the cruel ſnares of a deceitful world, you would, from pity, comply with my deſire. Did I not think Hartland in every reſpect calculated

calculated to render you happy, not all his wealth would intereſt me in his favour; but when independence and worth are allied, as ſurely (I think) they are in him, a connexion with them is certainly deſirable. Oh! Matilda, to have you ſettled would give me happineſs too great for expreſſion." He ſtopped; by her countenance he ſaw her conflicting emotions, and he gave her time to think.

Thus urged, Matilda was in agony: ſhe ſhuddered at the idea of accepting Hartland; yet how to refuſe him ſhe knew not, without appearing inflexibly obſtinate, or aſſigning the true reaſon for doing ſo: to do the latter was impoſſible; even death itſelf was preferable to the ſhame which would attend confeſſing an attachment for a man ſo ſituated as Howard.

She heſitated—ſhe reflected;—again ſhe thought, by accepting Hartland, ſhe ſhould

in ſome degree perform her duty to Belmore, the conſciouſneſs of which would leſſen her miſery; beſides, the active life ſhe ſhould, by doing ſo, be engaged in, might, by preventing her thoughts from dwelling upon what now occupied them, greatly contribute to remove her unfortunate prepoſſeſſion: ſhe could not help, however, ſincerely wiſhing the ſuit entirely dropped.

Belmore at length finding ſhe either would not, or could not ſpeak, took her hand, and in a voice of tender ſolemnity ſaid:—"I have now, my dear, urged all that I poſſibly could think of to render you propitious to Mr. Hartland's propoſal; I ſhall therefore conclude with this definitive ſentence, that it is now in your power to give the moſt exquiſite pleaſure, or the moſt bitter anguiſh, to my heart; and that the probable

probable peace of my laſt moments depends upon the manner in which I ſhall leave you ſituated."

Matilda could hear no more: ſhe flung herſelf at his feet, and in an agitation which rendered her ſcarcely articulate, exclaimed, "No! the child of your bounty, ſhe whom you foſtered in your boſom, ſhall not ſtab it with ingratitude.——I am yours:—my friend—my benefactor—diſpoſe of me as you pleaſe!—and oh! aſſiſt me in teaching this wayward heart to feel leſs reluctance in complying with your wiſhes."

"My child," ſaid the good man, raiſing and fondly preſſing her to his boſom, while tears of unutterable tenderneſs trickled down his cheeks, "how much does this compliance oblige me! Dearer, indeed, it cannot make you to me, for above all earthly objects I have ever loved Matilda."

He then ſeated her, and ſaid every thing which could ſoothe or comfort her. His kind expreſſions overcame her ſpirits; ſhe wept violently, and her ſighs and tears denoted a heart o'ercharged with grief. Belmore was affected by her diſtreſs; but though he was feeling, he was not weak: and rejoiced at having drawn her into a meaſure which he doubted not would eradicate a paſſion he thought only founded on romantic pity. Inſtead of being agonized by the idea of ſeeing her pining away under the pangs of hopeleſs love, or leaving her unprotected, he rejoiced to think he ſhould now behold her in a ſituation which, from elegance, education, and beauty, ſhe was qualified to adorn; in which ſhe muſt make exertions that could ſcarcely fail, he thought, of removing her melancholy.

They continued together till the clock reminded them of the lateneſs of the hour.

—Belmore

—Belmore embraced, bleſt, and again affectionately thanked her; while ſhe, unable to ſpeak, retired to her chamber.

Here, no longer ſoothed or ſupported by him, ſhe relapſed into agonies at the idea of the promiſe ſhe had given to him, a promiſe which her heart felt every moment more reluctant to fulfil: it was not yet too late, ſhe reflected, to declare ſhe could not keep it!—ſhe ſtarted at the thought!—but could ſhe do ſo without confeſſing her prepoſſeſſion, for whom?—for Howard!—a married man! Heavens! could ſhe ſupport the ſhame of ſuch an avowal? No.—Could ſhe bear to give ſorrow to Mr. Belmore, the friend of her infancy, the guardian of her youth?—Could ſhe bear to imbitter not only his preſent, but his laſt moments? No: to do ſo would be attended with horror!—To

comply, therefore, with his wiſhes—to become, as ſhe had promiſed, the wife of Mr. Hartland, was her only alternative.—To ſubmit to this alternative with ſome degree of compoſure, ſhe endeavoured to ſummon all her reſolution to her aid, and quiet the perturbed paſſions of her mind, in efforts to regain tranquillity. The night ſtole away unheeded; nor had ſhe an idea of retiring to reſt, till the twittering of ſparrows, from the eaves of the cottage, rouſed her from her meditations; and opening the ſhutter, ſhe ſaw the grey dawn appearing: ſhe then retired haſtily to bed, where, fatigued and exhauſted by the various emotions ſhe had experienced, ſhe ſoon fell into a profound ſleep, in which ſhe continued till the maid, entering her apartment, informed her, her maſter had been waiting breakfaſt for her a long time.—She ſtarted up, and enquiring the hour, heard

it

it was juſt eleven!—three hours beyond their uſual time of breakfaſting! Aſhamed of ſuch apparent indolence, ſhe dreſſed herſelf in haſte; but on entering the parlour, how great was her confuſion to ſee Hartland there!—ſhe involuntarily ſtepped back, and would have retreated to her room, had not Belmore followed her, and reconducted her in.

Her whole frame trembled, and terror and repugnance ſeized her heart, when Hartland advancing, with looks of tranſport, took her hand, and paſſionately kiſſing it, thanked her in the moſt rapturous terms for conferring on him ſo much happineſs.

Pale, weak, almoſt ſinking with agitation, Matilda received his extravagant ſpeeches in ſilence:—ſhe ſaw it was now too late to recede, and that to betray her

emotions might hereafter be productive of much ſuffering to her; yet ſcarcely could ſhe conceal them. The luxury of ſolitude was not allowed her the whole day, as Hartland could not think of quitting the cottage. Naturally impetuous in every undertaking, and impatient of delay, he reſted not till the wedding-day was fixed—and it was at length ſettled that it ſhould be that day fortnight.

From this period he became Matilda's ſhadow; ſhe could not ſtir from the houſe without him: ſhe now, indeed, took very little pleaſure in rambling about it, ſince every ſpot reminded her of ſcenes ſhe was anxious to have buried in oblivion.

Hartland diſpatched meſſengers to London, (where every thing can in a moment be procured for money) for a number of valuable preſents for his intended bride; and

and by theſe, and the ſettlement he made upon her, evinced not only his affection, but a diſpoſition truly generous.

Patty Hillgrove ſoon heard what was going on at the cottage, and felt the utmoſt regret at the proſperity of Matilda: full of curioſity, ſhe went to it, and was not a little ſurpriſed at the dejected looks of its fair inhabitant; the proſpect of ſuch a connexion as ſhe was about forming, being, ſhe thought, ſufficient to elevate her to extacy, and ſhe could not forbear expreſſing the ſurpriſe her melancholy excited.

Immediately after the ceremony, it was ſettled they ſhould leave the Hamlet. Hartland left at Matilda's option, either to go to the metropolis, or to his ſeat; ſhe preferred going to the latter. Patty felt ſorry at the idea of her departure; not from any

any regard ſhe felt for her, but merely becauſe ſhe thought ſhe ſhould loſe much amuſement, by her quitting the neighbourhood. Her father, however, who had long been tired of her perverſe humour, contrived a ſcheme which effectually removed all regret ſhe felt on this account. He came one morning to the cottage in ſuch haſte, he was quite out of breath, and after ſcraping and bowing a conſiderable time to Matilda, (whom he treated with particular reſpect, ſince informed of her intended marriage with a great 'Squire) he ſaid, if ſhe would be pleaſed to take his daughter Patty for an attendant, it would be doing him a great favour; that ſhe had a pretty little hand at nick-knacks, and all theſe kind of things which a lady wants; but ſhe was no good in the world to him, as he never had had a fat turkey on his table,

nor

nor a good cheeſe in his dairy, ſince ſhe managed his houſe—was ſhe gone, his ſiſter Margery (good old ſoul) whom her ill-humour had baniſhed from it, would come back to him, and he ſhould then be quite happy.

Hartland, who was preſent, immediately declared ſhe ſhould be accepted in the capacity he wiſhed; and ſaid it was probable he might have her ſettled, ere long, with one of his handſome young tenants.

Patty was delighted at hearing this: all ſhe deſired was to be from under her father's countroul, which had long been inſupportable to her.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

" What charms has ſorrow in that face?
" Sorrow ſeems pleas'd to dwell with ſo much ſweetneſs;
" Yet, now and then a melancholy ſmile
" Breaks out, like lightning in a winter's night,
" And ſhews a moment's day."

DRYDEN'S ALL FOR LOVE.

THE day at length arrived on which Matilda was to reſign the protection of Belmore!—give up the ſweet delight of attending on him, and enter upon a ſtate to which all her feelings were averſe.

She aroſe with a heavineſs ſhe could not diſſipate, which ſeemed a preſentiment ſhe was about ſacrificing all her earthly happineſs:

neſs: the preſence of Patty, who attended her while dreſſing, alone prevented her from breaking into tears and lamentations.

Supported by the arm of Belmore, and followed by Patty, ſhe walked to the church, where Aſhmore and Hartland were waiting to receive her. While the ceremony was performing, all the faculties of her ſoul ſeemed ſuſpended; but when ſhe received the congratulations of the little party, and was folded to the boſom of Belmore, her ſenſibility returned, and a flood of tears ſtreamed down her cheeks.

Belmore was inexpreſſibly affected: the ſolemnity of the ſcene had ſtruck him with a kind of dread; he began to think he ſhould not have urged her as he had done; and in the moment he gave her away, he felt he ſhould be the moſt wretched of men, if ſhe was not happy in her new condition.

They

They returned to the cottage, where a neat breakfaſt was prepared for them, and a ſuperb coach and ſix waiting to convey them to Hartland-Lodge. Patty was all amazement and extacy on ſeeing it.—"Lord! what a handſome coach! what beautiful horſes! what rich liveries! what happineſs ſome folks are born to!" ſhe exclaimed, "what pleaſure to poſſeſs ſuch a carriage!"

Its fair miſtreſs ſighed at thoſe exclamations; already ſhe felt how diſtinct grandeur and happineſs were from each other.

Immediately after breakfaſt they roſe to depart. Aſhmore invoked, with all the warmth of piety and affection, Heaven's choiceſt bleſſings on the new-married couple. The two domeſtics followed Matilda out in tears. The preſence of Hartland had not power to reſtrain the grief they felt

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at loſing their gentle miſtreſs. Belmore hurried Patty after her, and the moment they were ſeated, it drove off, and Matilda gave a laſt look, and a laſt adieu, to the dear and humble manſion of her friend.

The carriage proceeded with the utmoſt velocity till it came to the road by the Abbey: here the ground being uneven and rugged in many places, it was obliged to proceed more leiſurely, and the Abbey for a long time remained in view. Matilda ſighed, as her eyes, for a few minutes, reſted involuntarily upon it; and on withdrawing them, a faint bluſh tinged her cheek at finding Mr. Belmore's faſtened upon her, which was ſoon, however, ſucceeded by a deadly paleneſs.

"Lord!" ſaid Patty, "I ſhould have liked of all things to have ſeen Mr. Howard in his regimentals; I dare ſay he looked monſtrous

monſtrous handſome in them; for to be ſure he is a fine young man, and has quite got up his heart and ſpirits, I ſuppoſe, ſince he went amongſt the officers and ſoldiers."

"Who, or what is he? (ſaid Hartland). Mr. Aſhmore once or twice mentioned ſomething about him, and he muſt have been a ſtrange ſingular character from what I have heard." Belmore, who, for many reaſons, wiſhed to wave the ſubject, ſlightly ſaid, peculiar afflictions had given him a ſolitary habit; then pointing to a fine proſpect, he changed the diſcourſe.

Hartland-Lodge was only forty miles from the Hamlet; they therefore expected to reach it about the faſhionable hour of dining. They were within two or three miles of it, when a beautiful phaëton and four paſſed them, in which, notwithſtanding

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the rapidity with which it went, Matilda recognized Bromley, in deep mourning, with a very beautiful woman ſeated beſide him.

"That is a neighbour of yours," ſaid Hartland, addreſſing Mr. Belmore, "who has juſt paſſed us, and alſo of mine; his unele, who died lately, has left him a large eſtate near the Lodge; we are not, however, on viſiting terms, nor ever ſhall." "So much the better," cried Belmore; "men of his profeſſed principles ſhould always be diſcouraged."

"Pray, Sir," ſaid Patty to Hartland, "may I juſt aſk if he is married to the fine young lady who is with him?"—Hartland ſmiled. "'Tis a temporary marriage," cried he.

Mr. Hartland's tenants met his carriage on entering the avenue, dreſſed in their gayeſt

gayeſt attire, and preceded by a pipe and tabor. A ſelect party of his friends were aſſembled at the houſe to receive the lovely bride. Hartland, with a countenance expreſſive of rapture, led her amongſt them, and fondly welcomed her to her new habitation. All was a ſcene of joyous feſtivity; large tables were laid out on the lawn for the tenants; every countenance was gay, nor was there a heavy heart amongſt the group except hers who occaſioned all this rejoicing. Dejection marked every feature, and every effort to appear cheerful ended in a greater degree of melancholy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

" Aſide he turn'd;
" For envy, and with jealous leer malign,
" Ey'd them aſkaunce."

MILTON.

THE conſtant gaiety which reigned at Hartland-Lodge, kept Matilda in a continual buſtle, and prevented her thoughts from dwelling long on any ſubject; and Belmore fondly flattered himſelf ſhe was beginning to experience that happineſs he firmly believed would attend her union.

Hartland's love ſeemed every day to increaſe; he regarded Matilda as the moſt lovely

lovely and amiable of women, and he conſidered himſelf ſuperlatively bleſſed in poſſeſſing ſuch a treaſure; yet he ſometimes felt an uneaſineſs at the coldneſs with which ſhe received his aſſiduities.

Grateful in her nature, ſhe could not long, however, receive ſuch unremitting attentions as he paid her, without feeling a tenderneſs for him, which ſhe hoped was the forerunner of that ſincere regard ſhe now began to imagine he deſerved.

While thus Matilda was endeavouring to regulate every wayward feeling of her heart, to form not only her actions but her thoughts according to the moſt rigid rules of virtue, and to perform theſe duties ſhe ſubmitted to incur in compliance with the wiſhes of others, the blackeſt ſchemes were forming againſt her peace.

Bromley,

Bromley, in the neighbourhood of Hartland-Lodge, could not fail of hearing the praiſes which every tongue was liberal in beſtowing upon Matilda. Univerſal was the admiration her elegance and beauty excited; and that paſſion, which had for ſome time lain dormant in his breaſt from another engagement, was now not only revived but increaſed by theſe eulogiums.

Chance had thrown in his way the perfidious, yet lovely wife of Howard: gay, gallant, and handſome, he ſoon inſinuated himſelf into her favour, and prevailed on her to accompany him to the manſion his uncle had left him.

But what he eaſily obtained, was always ſure to be ſlightly regarded. The paſſion he felt for her was tranſient. The difficulties he encountered in his purſuit of Matilda, had given her a degree of value in his

eſtimation nothing elſe could poſſibly have done; and, beſides gratifying his love, now to ſucceed in his deſigns upon her, would be a triumph of the moſt glorious kind over Belmore, whoſe ſcruples he ridiculed; and Hartland, whom he deteſted, from the haughty manner in which he had rejected all overtures towards an intimacy.

Mrs. Howard, though artful, was no match for him. He ſoon drew from her all the particulars of her life he deſired to know, particularly the motive of her jaunt to the Abbey; and, in order to induce her to act in ſuch a manner as he wiſhed, he aſſured her he was confident Howard would have conſented to a reconciliation with her, had not the blandiſhments of Matilda faſcinated his ſenſes: her he repreſented as a finiſhed character of deceit, on whom the heavieſt puniſhments ſhould fall for

thus

thus cauſing inquietude to his lovely Julia. Wrought by his inſinuations to the moſt violent rage and malice, Julia heſitated not to declare her readineſs to accede to any propoſal which could effect the demolition of her rival's peace and reputation.

Bromley exulted at the ſucceſs of his artifices, and reſolved to try and obtain Patty as an auxiliary in his deſigns upon her lady, which, from her weakneſs, credulity, and envy, he did not think he ſhould find a very difficult taſk.

Accordingly one day, when he knew the family were engaged at a ſplendid entertainment in the neighbourhood, he diſpatched a note to Patty, deſiring to ſee her immediately, in a little wood near the houſe, and ſtrictly charging her to conceal to whom ſhe was coming.

Patty flew thither directly, all ecſtaſy and impatience, and found him waiting to receive her.

The pleaſure he affected to feel at ſeeing her, inſpired her with delight. After he had aſked her about the events which took place at the Hamlet, ſince his departure from it, and whether ſhe was happy with Matilda, he added, he was much ſurpriſed to hear of her being with Mrs. Hartland, who had often declared to him, ſhe conſidered her a weak, aukward, ignorant girl, with whom nothing but neceſſity could have made her keep company.—Patty, with an enraged countenance, drew up her head, exclaiming, "Indeed ſhe did not doubt Mrs. Hartland's having ſaid ſo, as ſhe thought her extremely ill-natured, and often wondered (for her part) how any one could like her."

Bromley having thrown her into the frame of mind he wiſhed, declared his opinion

opinion of Mrs. Hartland exactly corresponded with hers. He had now under his protection a lady, he ſaid, who by her means was deeply injured—the wife of Howard; whom he had treated with the utmoſt barbarity, in conſequence of the attachment he felt for her; "an attachment, (added he), which I am convinced ſhe exerted all her art to inſpire him with, and which I am alſo convinced he ſtill retains for her. As all Mrs. Howard's applications to him for ſupport and attention have been diſregarded, I therefore wiſh, my dear Patty, you would, from time to time, throw out ſuch little hints of it, as might lead Mr. Hartland to keep a ſtrict watch over his wife, and put it out of her power to give any hope to Howard, whoſe paſſion would then, no doubt, die away; a paſſion which has involved in miſery and misfortunes the moſt lovely and amiable of her ſex."

Patty, who had implicitly believed all he told her, felt ſo enraged at the diſrepectful manner in which ſhe imagined Matilda had mentioned her, that ſhe determined to take an early opportunity of letting Mr. Hartland hear all ſhe had learned; confident, from his jealous temper, which ſhe had ſufficient diſcernment to diſcover, ſhe ſhould, by doing ſo, have the happineſs of beholding Matilda as miſerable as ſhe now wiſhed her. This determination, however, was oppoſed by Bromley, who feared an abrupt diſcloſure might appear too much like deſign to produce the effect he deſired. He therefore made her promiſe to act as he had directed, namely, to mention what he had diſcloſed to her at different times, and, as if in the courſe of caſual converſation, and alſo to meet him from time to time, to let him know the reſult of the operations

he

he had planned, that he might inform his friend Mrs. Howard. He then preſented her with ſome ornaments, as a kind of retaining fee; and, charging her not to drop a hint before Belmore, of what he had told her, they ſeparated.

The baſe ſcheme he had laid, was to create a jealouſy in Hartland's mind, by artful hints, which would naturally cauſe him to treat Matilda in an unpleaſant manner. He then reſolved to throw himſelf in her way, and doubted not, the contraſt ſhe muſt unavoidably draw, between his tenderneſs and her huſband's moroſeneſs, would render her propitious to his ſuit, and enable him, at laſt, to carry her off in triumph.

CHAP. XII.

" Sudden he ſtarts,
" Shook from his tender trance, and reſtleſs runs
" To glimmering ſhades, and ſympathetic glooms,
" Where the dun umbrage o'er the falling ſtream
" Romantic, hangs; there through the penſive duſk
" Strays, in heart-thrilling meditation loſt,
" Indulging all to *Love*."

THOMSON.

PATTY was allowed to ſit with Matilda, when no company was expected; ſhe was alſo permitted to accompany her abroad, when no viſits were intended; nor was her converſation reſtrained. As ſhe was ſitting one

one morning in Matilda's dreſſing-room with her and Mr. Hartland, ſhe ſuddenly exclaimed, "Dear me! Madam, you don't walk out half ſo often here, as you uſed to do at the Hamlet; but, perhaps you have not the ſame inducement for rambling here that you had there. There is no old Abbey in this neighbourhood," (added ſhe, with a look which called a deep bluſh into the cheeks of Matilda). "Why, what particular attraction had the Abbey?" aſked Hartland, raiſing his eyes from a book which he was reading to himſelf. Matilda, bluſhing ſtill more deeply, remained ſilent. But Patty eagerly replied, "O dear! it was there poor Mr. Howard lived." "Howard!" repeated Hartland, turning his penetrating eyes on Matilda, "did his reſiding there then render a ramble to it ſo agreeable?"

Matilda felt her colour change, and overcome by a ſecret dread—by a painful conſciouſneſs of the ſtate of her heart, ſhe ſhrunk from his haughty and ſcrutinizing glances: her confuſion was but too viſible; and, after a ſilence of ſome minutes, he aroſe with a frown, and left the room. The tears of Matilda now burſt forth; and ſhe would have entreated Patty never to mention the Abbey again, but for the interpoſition of her pride, and the reflexion that ſuch an entreaty would be a kind of acknowledgement of feelings, which ſhe had ſo many reaſons for wiſhing to conceal.

Her faithleſs companion had now commenced her operations, and from time to time threw out ſly inſinuations of her attachment to Howard, which operated like a ſlow poiſon upon the mind of Hartland.

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Naturally impetuous, and from his former purſuits inclined to doubt the reality of female virtue, he was open to ſuſpicion and jealouſy; his love for Matilda was of that extravagant nature, which could ſcarcely permit him to think with calmneſs of her having even a partiality for another, much leſs a ſtrong prepoſſeſſion; and that ſhe had ſuch a prepoſſeſſion, from what he had heard, and the coldneſs of her manner, he could not doubt, and conſequently, that intereſted views had alone influenced her to accept him—the thought was almoſt madneſs!—His peace was deſtroyed by it, and diſtruſt poiſoned the fountain of domeſtic ſweets.

The change in his behaviour, denoted the ſuſpicions he harboured—a change, which deſtroyed the tenderneſs and eſteem Matilda was beginning to experience for

him, and made her regard him as a moroſe tyrant.

She was compelled to go out one morning to pay ſome ceremonious viſits in the neighbourhood: the chariot had not proceeded above a mile when ſhe ſaw a party of military approaching. The horſes, unuſed to the ſound of a drum, were ſtartled, and ſet off with a velocity which could not be checked, plunging as they went, in the moſt frightful manner.

Their career was at laſt ſtopped, by one of the wheels being daſhed to pieces. The inhabitants of a little cottage by the road, now came out to offer their aſſiſtance: they were joined by an officer, who had left the party, and followed the carriage with incredible ſpeed: with a countenance of terror and diſtraction, he tore open the door, and bore Matilda, who by this time had ſunk ſenſeleſs to the bottom of the carriage,

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in his arms to the cottage.—Water was the only thing which could be procured from the poor people to contribute to her recovery; with this they ſprinkled her pale face, and by degrees ſhe ſhowed ſymptoms of returning life. Her ſurpriſe was great in finding herſelf in the arms of an officer; but how infinitely was that ſurpriſe increaſed, when, on looking up, ſhe found herſelf in the arms of Howard!

Her aſtoniſhment almoſt reduced her to the condition from which ſhe had juſt recovered. "Oh! tell me," ſaid Howard, while he preſſed her to his throbbing heart, "tell me to what chance I am indebted for a meeting, at once ſo painful and ſo pleaſing, ſo fraught with torture and delight!"

"An unforeſeen one indeed," ſobbed Matilda. "Tell me," cried Howard, alarmed by her ſighs and tears, "is Belmore,

more, our ineſtimable friend, well?—ſay, Matilda, deareſt of all human beings, is all peace and contentment ſtill at the Hamlet?"—"Alas!" thought Matilda, "all there is peace and contentment, but all within my boſom is ſorrow and confuſion!"

As ſoon as ſhe was recovered, the ſervants proceeded to the Lodge for another carriage; and ſhe, diſengaging herſelf from Howard's ſupporting arms, ſeated herſelf upon a little wicker chair, in an agitation and diſtreſs of mind too violent to eſcape his notice, or be attributed by him ſolely to her fright. The poor ruſtics withdrew to a reſpectful diſtance, and Howard, as ſoon as he ſaw they were unobſerved, again enquired what had brought her from the Hamlet?

"You have heard of no change then," ſaid ſhe, "ſince your departure?"—"No!" replied he, with an alarmed look, "I have not."

not." She was ſilent:—again he urged her to ſpeak. At laſt, in faultering accents, ſhe revealed her marriage! The countenance of Howard aſſumed a death-like paleneſs! —his ſoul ſeemed to have received a ſhock it could not ſupport!—He ſtarted from his chair in the utmoſt emotion, and walked about in an agitation he could not conceal!

When the violence of his feelings had a little ſubſided, he returned to Matilda. "Alas!" cried he, "the change indeed is great!—you are married!—and every trace of your unfortunate friend is obliterated! —To have lived in your remembrance was indeed my only earthly hope!—but why ſhould I murmur?—you are happy;—that knowledge to me, ſhould be ſufficient to check each repining wiſh. Oh! pure and permanent may your felicity be, moſt amiable, moſt lovely of women!"

"Alas!"

"Alas!" thought ſhe, "how deceitful are appearances!—he thinks me happy; but never before was I ſuch an alien to felicity!"

"You are married," continued he, "and I ſhall be no more remembered!—new objects, more intereſting, more attractive, will obliterate my idea;—that ſoft pity, which operated like a ſoothing charm on my grief, will be loſt for ever; and while I dwell on the memory of Matilda, ſhe will forget my very exiſtence!"—"No, Howard," cried Matilda, inexpreſſibly affected, "change of ſituation cannot produce ſuch a change of ſentiment; thoſe for whom I profeſſed a friendſhip, ſtill retain it: you are amongſt the number, and be aſſured my beſt wiſhes will ever be yours."

He ſnatched her hand; and while he preſſed it to his lips, a tear fell upon it.

"Yes,"

"Yes," he exclaimed, "you are the ſame angel I left." Matilda withdrew her hand; "ſhe feared, ſhe ſaid, ſhe was detaining him from his party," and beſought him no longer to delay rejoining them. They were going to a town about a mile off, he replied, to halt till the next day, and he was in no haſte to join them. "I know," cried he, "I had better depart; yet when ſo unexpectedly we have met, moſt aſſuredly I think for the laſt time, I cannot tear myſelf away."

He ſat down beſide her; he aſked a number of queſtions about the Hamlet—he mentioned the firſt evening they ſaw each other—he talked of Belmore and his mild benevolence: he appeared to dwell on paſt ſcenes, with that corroding remembrance which is felt for "joys departed, never to return."

Matilda

Matilda ſighed as he ſpoke; the tranquil happineſs ſhe enjoyed when firſt known to him, recurred to her memory; and the contraſt ſhe experienced in her preſent ſituation, excited a grief ſhe could not ſuppreſs.

Howard was ſtruck by her manner! Her face was no longer illumined by gladneſs! her eyes had loſt their luſtre; the roſe upon her cheek was pale; inſtead of the elevation of hope, he ſaw the languor of dejection; inſtead of the ſmiles of contentment, he beheld the tears of affliction, which flowed with violence as he continued to ſpeak of many little incidents which had paſſed at the Hamlet. Shocked by her melancholy, he could ſcarce refrain enquiring whether ſhe was happy? He wiſhed alſo to know who the enviable being was, to whom ſhe had ſo ſuddenly given her hand; yet he could

could not bring himſelf to aſk—his ſoul ſecretly revolted from mentioning Matilda's huſband!

She now began to grow dreadfully uneaſy at his ſtay, as ſhe expected a carriage every moment from the Lodge, and Hartland in it; and ſhe earneſtly beſought him to depart. He wondered at the impatience ſhe expreſſed for his departure; but he felt more grieved than offended by it. That reſentful pride which, a ſhort time before, would have made him obey ſuch an entreaty, was loſt in dejection. He lingered in the cottage, and felt, while ſhe remained within it, he could not leave it.

"You ſaid," cried he, "you were not altered: you are, or you would not wiſh to drive me from you." At this moment, Matilda heard the ſound of a carriage: an univerſal trembling ſeized her: ſhe had neither

neither power to ſpeak nor move, and ſunk back in the chair, dreading the arrival of Hartland, and the moroſe humour to which ſhe feared the preſent ſcene would give riſe. In a few moments the coach ſtopped; and Hartland, as ſhe had feared, and Patty alight from it. The former, too much agitated by his apprehenſions about her, to notice any other being, caught her to his boſom, and with his wonted tenderneſs enquired whether ſhe was hurt? But his fond interrogatories were ſoon ſtopped by the malicious Patty, who, half ſcreaming, exclaimed, "O! Lord! Mr. Howard, who could have thought of ſeeing you here? it is the ſtrangeſt thing in the world to find you here alone with Mrs. Hartland!" At the name of Howard, Hartland ſtarted, and ſurveyed him with the keeneſt inſpection. He was ſtruck with the manly elegance of his figure,

figure, the noble expreſſion of his countenance, and he thought indeed he was a rival might well be feared. The rudeneſs of his inſpection called forth all the haughtineſs of Howard's ſoul. He frowned, and walked indignantly to the door.

Matilda, in faultering accents, then explained the cauſe of the accident. Her account correſponded with that given by the ſervants; yet the mean ſuſpicions Hartland had for ſome time encouraged, made him think, almoſt againſt conviction, ſomething more than chance occaſioned this interview.

With a ſullen voice he inquired whether ſhe was able to accompany him home? On anſwering in the affirmative, he took her trembling hand, and led her to the coach, without noticing Howard in the ſlighteſt manner. Matilda was inexpreſſibly ſhocked;

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She wiſhed to bid him adieu—ſhe wiſhed to aſſure him of her unalterable friendſhip, but ſhe durſt not look or ſpeak. Patty, under no reſtraint, tormented him with queſtions which he at laſt would not anſwer.

He ſaw the carriage depart with a ſigh: —"Is this, then," ſaid he, (as he looked after it) "the being to whom Matilda has given her hand? Proud, ſullen, diſdainful! How little qualified to render her happy! But ſeldom, indeed, are kindred minds united." He rewarded the poor people of the cottage for their trouble and attention, and then departed.

On his way to the town where the party halted, he was ſtruck with ſome extenſive and beautiful improvements which ſurrounded a very noble houſe, at no great diſtance from the road. He aſked a labourer who was paſſing, to whom the ſeat belonged?

"'Squire

"'Squire Hartland," the man replied. Howard lingered as he paſſed it.—"Wealth and independence are hers, indeed," ſaid he; "but what wretched ſubſtitutes for health and content! Her countenance denoted not a mind at eaſe. She is no longer the blooming Matilda, who adorned the humble reſidence of Belmore."

In the hilarity of the officers he could not join. The wretchedneſs his conflicting paſſions occaſioned, he could ſcarcely conceal, and retired almoſt immediately after dinner. The evening was then far advanced; the gloom and ſtillneſs of twilight accorded with his preſent feelings, and tempted him to wander from the town, and he involuntarily took the road to the Lodge: the gates which opened into the various improvements were not ſecured, ſo that he had free acceſs to them all.

As

As he wandered through the dark and mazy labyrinths of the grove, which partly encompaſſed the houſe, a melancholy, at once painful and pleaſing, diffuſed itſelf throughout his ſoul, mingled with an enthuſiaſm of tenderneſs.

"I now tread," cried he, "in the footſteps of Matilda. I walk beneath the trees which have afforded her ſhelter. Ah! never will ſhe think, as ſhe retraces thoſe paths, that the wretched Howard has prayed in them for her felicity."

He explored every avenue:—there was faſcination in the ſpot, from whence he could contemplate her abode:—the very trees which gently waved around him, ſeemed to whiſper the loved name of Matilda.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

" Ten thouſand fears
" Invented wild, ten thouſand frantic views
" Of horrid rivals, hanging on the charms
" For which he melts in fondneſs, eat him up
" With fervent anguiſh, and conſuming rage."

THOMSON.

MATILDA's mind was now a prey to diſquietude. When ſhe entered the carriage ſhe could ſcarcely ſupport herſelf. Hartland was too gloomy and unkind to offer her any aſſiſtance, and Patty, pert and unfeeling, tortured her with her remarks

about the ſtrangeneſs of her meeting with Howard.

"So," cried Hartland, after a gloomy ſilence of ſome minutes, "you really had no idea of ſeeing him." "None in the world," replied ſhe; "we never heard of him ſince he quitted the Hamlet; and to an accident, which nearly coſt me my life, our late interview was owing."

"To be ſure," ſaid Patty, "he was rejoiced to ſee you, though, indeed, I can't ſay his joy was viſible in his countenance, for he looked quite melancholy and pale; but I ſuppoſe there was ſufficient reaſon for that—for, no doubt, you told him you were married."

At theſe words, the paleneſs of Matilda's cheek gave way to a crimſon glow, and ſhe eagerly averted her head to conceal her confuſion, and avoid the louring and indignant

dignant glances of Hartland. No further converſation paſſed till they arrived at the Lodge, where ſhe found Belmore in an agony of impatience waiting her arrival. He was abſent when the ſervants came back for the coach, and returned but a few moments before it. Pale and trembling, he caught her in his arms, as ſhe deſcended from it, while a trickling tear declared the feelings he experienced at the idea of her having ſuffered from the accident ſhe had met with. Affected by his kindneſs, her drooping head ſunk upon his ſhoulder, and the emotions ſhe had long endeavoured to ſuppreſs, burſt forth with violence.

Hartland was diſpleaſed at this ſcene:—he diſliked the tenderneſs which ſubſiſted between them. I have before ſaid, he could not bear Matilda ſhould prefer any being to

himſelf. Belmore, he was convinced, poſſeſſed a much greater degree of her affection than he himſelf did; and, in conſequence of this conviction, he diſliked him.

Belmore was informed of her meeting Howard, and his eagerneſs to reſcue her from danger. "Yes," ſaid he, "noble, generous, humane Howard, would riſk his life for Matilda; but who that knows my child, would not feel ecſtacy in ſerving her?" Matilda was too much diſturbed by the events of the morning to appear at dinner; ſhe was obliged to lay down to reſt her agitated frame; but her mind ſhe could not tranquillize. The feelings manifeſted by Howard, diſturbed and tormented it, and deeply ſhe regretted their unhappy meeting.

Patty attended her, with a ſhow of great affection; ſhe brought her up tea, which was the

the only refreſhment ſhe could take, and would have ſat with her, had not Matilda ſaid ſhe preferred being alone.

But though unable to ſupport converſation, ſhe ſoon grew weary of ſupineneſs; and imagining a ramble in the grove might be of ſervice to her, ſhe threw on her cloak, and going down a flight of back ſtairs, went out unſeen, hoping on her return to be able to appear at ſupper, as an exertion to appear cheerful, ſhe truſted, would be agreeable to Hartland, who, notwithſtanding his moroſeneſs, ſhe wiſhed to pleaſe, from a conviction that it was her duty to do ſo. As ſhe entered the grove, little did ſhe imagine it contained the being who had cauſed her ſuch uneaſineſs; a being whom ſhe at once loved and eſteemed, yet lamented ever knowing.

The farther ſhe penetrated into the gloom and privacy of the grove, the greater in-

dulgence ſhe gave to the ſadneſs of her ſoul.

She reſted not till ſhe attained a little ruſtic building at its extremity, called the moſs-houſe. Its lining was of moſs; its ſeat was formed of entwined oziers, and flowering ſhrubs, planted thickly, almoſt concealed its entrance from view. Here ſhe entered, and ſitting down, endeavoured to recall her ſcattered ſpirits, and chaſe from them every recollection propriety could condemn.

"Although Hartland may accuſe me," ſhe cried, "I cannot be quite miſerable, while my own heart declares me undeſerving of his accuſations. Happy, indeed, I cannot be; the boſom which is taught to fear, cannot admit affection; and without affection, how joyleſs is the married ſtate! The gentleneſs, the tenderneſs of Howard's man-

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ner could not be forgotten, nor remembered without involuntary pleaſure: ſenſible, however, of the impropriety of dwelling on it, ſhe did not long permit herſelf to do ſo, and ſolemnly determined, whenever it occurred, inſtantly to endeavour to baniſh it from her mind.

A ſudden ruſtling amongſt the trees now alarmed her; ſhe aroſe precipitately, and going to the door, beheld the hated and unprincipled Bromley ſtanding by it. The ſurpriſe ſhe felt was not greater than that he manifeſted; with this difference, hers was accompanied with horror, his with rapture!

She would inſtantly have paſſed him, but he prevented her. "No, no," he exclaimed, ſeizing her hand as he ſpoke, "I cannot loſe ſuch an opportunity as chance has afforded me, of telling you I adore you! Yes, lovely, enchanting woman, the heart

you rejected is ſtill yours; and, notwithſtanding the barbarity you treated me with, I will venture to ſay, more attached to you than his, to whom ſo cruelly you gave a hand I almoſt died to obtain."

"I ſhould treat you with the ſilent ſcorn you deſerve," ſaid Matilda, "if your detaining me here did not compel me to ſpeak, that I might inſiſt upon your releaſing me."

"Not except you promiſe to meet me here to morrow evening." "Mr. Bromley," ſaid Matilda, in an accent expreſſive of indignation, "this inſolence ſhall not go unpuniſhed."

"What! you threaten me with the reſentment of your huſband? But as to that I am perfectly indifferent; a real lover, you know, is ever a deſperate kind of creature; and upon my ſoul, I am as much in love as ever: really I wonder you can be ſo cruel,

after

after the propoſals I made you at the Hamlet." "Propoſals!" interrupted ſhe,—"Yes, ſuch as excited the ſame contempt and deteſtation their author did."

"Nay, ſtop," ſaid he, "this is a little too much. You will throw me into deſpair, and I ſhall occupy the old Abbey inſtead of Howard.—A propos—is it not cruel in you to add love to his other misfortunes, and bewitch the poor man from his wife?"

Aſtoniſhment deprived Matilda of utterance; her frame ſhook with the violence of conflicting paſſions; and ſhe felt for her cruel inſulter the utmoſt abhorrence. Delighted at the diſtreſs he had thrown her into, he was proceeding to add to it, when the ſound of an approaching ſtep ſtruck his ear: he inſtantly dropped Matilda's hand, and darting into a thick avenue, was

out of ſight in a moment. The moſs-houſe was the place of aſſignation with Patty: in hopes of a meeting this evening, he had repaired to it, and was moſt agreeably ſurpriſed by the ſight of Matilda: all the pleaſing emotions, however, his unexpected meeting with her occaſioned, were ſoon diſſipated by her contemptuous expreſſions, which excited ſuch a malevolent rage in his boſom, as determined him, from revenge, whether or not he ſucceeded in his deſigns upon her virtue, to leave no means untried to deſtroy her reputation.

The terrified Matilda had not power to move from the ſpot where he had left her. The perſon whoſe approaching ſteps had hurried him away, now appeared; and ſhe beheld Hartland, with wildneſs and rage in his countenance! Her agitation and diſmay were augmented at his ſight. "So, Madam,

Madam, (cried he, attempting to ſpeak compoſedly), you have walked out to tranquillize your ſpirits; the air of the grove has ſomething inexpreſſibly refreſhing in it, particularly when one is alone." "I really came hither," ſaid the trembling Matilda, "in hopes the air might remove the languor my fright this morning occaſioned." "Oh! no doubt," exclaimed he, (ſmiling maliciouſly); "you expected your ſpirits would be much exhilarated. But tell me, Matilda," proceeded he, vehemently graſping her hand, "who was the perſon who juſted parted from you?" Matilda, terrified at the idea of the conſequences which might attend his knowing Bromley's impertinence, heſitated to reply; but, on his repeating the queſtion with ſtill greater vehemence, ſhe ſaid, "it was Bromley."

"Bromley!" he repeated, ſtedfaſtly looking at her. She declared it was, and that

the meeting was quite unexpected. "Oh, no doubt," cried he, with a ſatirical ſmile, "all your meetings are unexpected. Well, Matilda, I am now confirmed in the opinion I have long been forming of you; what that is, you may probably conjecture, as I am ſure you muſt know the one you merit."

To this ambiguous language Matilda could not reply. She accepted his proferred arm, and proceeded to the Lodge, her heart palpitating with dread, yet ſecretly rejoicing he had not enquired minutely into Bromley's converſation, as ſhe had no doubt, from his warmth of temper, the moſt ſerious conſequences would have reſulted from his knowing it.

She tried to combat with her feelings, and forced herſelf to ſit down to ſupper, though her inclination would have led her

to

to her chamber, where, unreſtrained, ſhe might have given vent to them. Belmore watched her looks with an expreſſion of melancholy in his countenance, which ſeemed to imply a fear that her heart was not as when with him—the ſoft repoſitory of peace.

The ill-humour of Hartland was cauſed by a circumſtance which ſtrengthened, or rather confirmed all his ſuſpicions. He went to Matilda's apartment after tea, and, on miſſing her, inſtantly conjectured ſhe was gone to the grove: thither he flew, diſpleaſed at her quitting the houſe with ſuch an appearance of ſecrecy. He had not gone far, when he heard the creaking of one of the doors which led from the grove into the road, and turning round with quickneſs, he ſaw Howard going out. From this circumſtance, he abandoned himſelf

himſelf to the moſt unbounded jealouſy; and had he ſurpriſed Howard and Matilda together, in all probability ſome dreadful cataſtrophe would have taken place, in conſequence of the irritated ſtate of his feelings: but this was prevented by their having fortunately taken different paths in the grove.

In the firſt impulſe of his rage, Hartland was about purſuing Howard, till he ſuddenly recollected that, while purſuing him, he might miſs Matilda, againſt whom he reflected, if this was the caſe, he could not bring any direct charge:—in queſt of her he therefore went. The agitation ſhe witneſſed, he conſtrued into the terror of guilt, and her declaring Bromley the perſon who was with her, a complete falſehood. He ſo far maſtered his paſſion, however, as not to accuſe her abruptly about Howard, leſt his doing

doing ſo might put her upon her guard, and enable her to counteract the meaſures he intended to take for preventing another interview; but the idea of being compelled to watch her, gave the moſt excruciating pangs to his heart!—he adored Matilda!—and exiſtence loſt half its value from the moment he thought ſhe was attached to another; and that, if even ſhe preſerved her wedded faith inviolate, her heart was not hers to beſtow.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

— "Think'ſt thou I'll make a life of jealouſy,
"To follow ſtill the changes of the moon,
"With freſh ſurmiſes! No; to be once in doubt,
"Is to be reſolved."

SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO.

BELMORE was no longer a welcome gueſt at the Lodge. Hartland thought he engroſſed too much of Matilda's attention, and treated him with the utmoſt coolneſs. Belmore, on perceiving this alteration in his manner, determined immediately to depart for the Hamlet, Matilda, who knew

knew the motives which cauſed this reſolution, would not oppoſe it, though the loſs of his ſociety was to her the deprivation of every thing which could now afford her pleaſure. He refuſed accepting Mr. Hartland's travelling chariot, and ſent to the adjacent town for one.

On the morning of his departure he retired with Matilda, for a few minutes, into her dreſſing-room. Here, in the fullneſs of his heart, he implored her forgiveneſs for leading her into a ſituation ſo productive of uneaſineſs.—"How little do we know," cried he, "what will really contribute to our happineſs! I now ſee the folly of being over anxious about particular events, uncertain as we are, whether thoſe events in the end may not plunge us into *wretchedneſs!*

"My motive, it is true, for preſſing you to this union, was a good one; but this reflexion

reflexion will not be able to conſole me, if you are unhappy—never will peace be an inmate in my boſom, while it continues a ſtranger to yours!" Matilda wept: ſhe claſped her hands together, and caſt a deſpairing look to Heaven!—Belmore, unutterably affected, preſſed her to his boſom:—he endeavoured to leſſen her emotion by ſaying every thing which wiſdom could deviſe, to fortify her mind againſt the calamities or trials ſhe might experience.—He aſſured her, from ſome obſervations he had made on Hartland's diſpoſition, he was convinced her patient ſweetneſs would at laſt render him all ſhe wiſhed; and that though her path was at preſent unpleaſant, ſhe would hereafter find it ſtrewed with flowers.

He tried to cheer her ſpirits by ſaying, the enſuing ſpring he expected to ſee her at his

his cottage; he promiſed ſhe ſhould find her favourite walks in luxuriant order; he again embraced her, and tore himſelf away, leaving her in agonies of grief.

Hartland felt as if freed from a diſagreeable reſtraint by his departure. He was affected by the dejection of Matilda, and for a few days treated her with his wonted tenderneſs.

She retired, earlier than uſual, one night to her chamber, leaving Hartland engaged about ſome particular buſineſs in his library. Not finding herſelf inclined to ſleep, ſhe took up the play of Othello, and opened at the affecting ſcene where Deſdemona is expreſſing to her faithful Emilia, the fears and melancholy occaſioned by the alteration in the conduct of her lord. The pathetic language expreſſed the very feelings of her own ſoul, and drew tears from her. As

ſhe

ſhe laid down the book upon the toilet to wipe them away, ſhe perceived a ſmall ſhagreen caſe there ſhe had never before obſerved. She haſtily took it up, and opened it: but what words can paint her ſurpriſe, on beholding within it the picture of Howard? —Never was there a more perfect reſemblance:—like Baſſanio, ſhe might have exclaimed

"What demi-god hath come ſo near creation?"

As ſoon as aſtoniſhment would permit her to think, a conviction that ſome vile combination was formed againſt her, ruſhed upon her mind; and, in a meditating attitude, ſhe ſtood with the miniature in her hand, conſidering what ſteps ſhe ſhould take to counteract the inſidious ſchemes ſo evidently formed againſt her. Thus abſorbed in

in thought, ſhe heard not Hartland entering her chamber—her attitude ſurpriſed him; he ſtole ſoftly behind her, and beheld the picture in her hand.

Had ſhe been really guilty, ſhe could not have betrayed greater emotion than ſhe did at this moment. The picture fell from her, and ſhe ſunk upon a chair almoſt lifeleſs. Frantic with rage, he ſtamped upon it as it lay at her feet. "Thus then (cried he), baſe, perfidious woman, you compel me to deteſt you!—is this the innocence, the faith, the love I expected to find in Matilda? Good Heaven! how much have I been deceived? Thus accuſed, ſhe ſummoned all her reſolution to her aid, to refute the unjuſt aſperſions caſt upon her:—ſhe told him the manner in which ſhe had found the picture; but he laughed at her aſſertions, and aſſured her, her artifices were too ſhal-

low

low to impoſe upon him. "This, indeed," cried he, taking up a folded letter, which had been placed under the caſe, and unnoticed by her, "I may, perhaps, believe came hither by ſtratagem." He opened it, and read the following words:

"Exiſtence loſes half its charms, while abſent from you. Let us no longer dread the world's cenſure—we can yet enjoy all the ſweets of life—let our next interview terminate all ſuſpenſe: my heart is unutterably yours, and I flatter myſelf its ſincere conſtancy and truth will influence you to be propitious to

"C. HOWARD."

"Good God!" cried the ſhocked Matilda, "how am I enſnared!—what a vile plot is laid againſt me?—No, Hartland, I am

am not capable of duplicity; and I ſwear, ſolemnly ſwear, the letter and picture were never ſeen before this night by me."

"Hold, Matilda," he exclaimed: "with ſuch evidences as I now have to prove the contrary, I cannot give credit to ſuch an aſſertion; be aſſured, whatever indulgence you receive from me, muſt proceed from my affection, not my credulity."

"If you are then determined to treat me," replied Matilda, "with unkindneſs and ſuſpicion, let us part—let me return to the cottage from whence you took me—there I ſhall find an aſylum, though blackened by calumny, and wounded by reproach.

"Yet do not be ſo cruel," continued ſhe, while tears ſtreamed down her cheeks, "as to deſtroy a reputation which till this hour has been unſullied. I deſire this, for his

ſake

ſake, who has been to me a parent. Oh! let me not accuſe myſelf of bringing his grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave." Her ſoftneſs ſomewhat appeaſed the rage of Hartland. "I wiſh not to afflict him," he ſaid; "I wiſh, if poſſible, to ſave him from feeling ſuch pangs—ſuch bitter pangs as I now experience." He then retired, in ſpite of all her efforts to detain him, and ſhe durſt not follow him for fear of irritating paſſions already too much raiſed.

She ſpent the night in agonies—her peace, perhaps her fame, was deſtroyed; and Belmore, ſhe feared, would ſink beneath the knowledge of her ſufferings. By day-break her maid entered her apartment, and informed her ſhe was ordered to pack up her clothes. Matilda ſtarted from the bed on which ſhe had thrown herſelf, without undreſſing, and inſiſted on her going to Mr. Hartland,

Hartland, and telling him ſhe wiſhed to ſpeak to him immediately. The maid obeyed her commands, and in a few minutes Hartland entered the chamber; and Matilda, then with looks of terror, beſought him to acquaint her with his intentions.

"Matilda," ſaid he, "for this alarm there is no occaſion; you have ſtill too great a hold of my heart to dread any danger. Buſineſs, which has long required my preſence at my eſtate in Ireland, has made me reſolve on going thither. Patty Hillgrove I intend ſending home to her father this day; by her you may write to Mr. Belmore, and aſſign whatever reaſons you pleaſe for this unexpected journey." Though this appeared like a baniſhment to Matilda, ſhe expreſſed no reluctance; but retired to her cloſet to write, merely informing Mr. Belmore particular buſineſs

took Hartland from England. The houſe was now all in commotion; the domeſtics being all employed in preparing for the ſudden departure of the family.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

——— "Thou ſerpent, that name beſt
"Befits thee! with him leagu'd, thyſelf as falſe
"And hateful."

MILTON.

PATTY, by being ſent back to her father, was now in ſome degree puniſhed for implicitly obeying the injunctions of Bromley. She felt, however, no remorſe for her conduct, nor the anguiſh it had cauſed to Matilda; all the regret ſhe felt was occaſioned by the enjoyments ſhe would loſe in being ſent from Mr. Hartland's.

Bromley procured the letter and the picture, which did ſo much miſchief, from the perfidious Julia; the firſt ſhe had received previous to her marriage, the latter after it had taken place: theſe were given by him to Patty, with directions for placing them in the manner already deſcribed: thus was a dagger planted in the boſom of unſuſpecting virtue, by the vileſt ſtratagems. After having accompliſhed her purpoſe, Patty retired to bed, where ſhe ſlept as comfortably as uſual, till an early hour in the morning, when a ſervant awoke her, and deſired her to riſe directly and come to Mr. Hartland.

Her heart fluttered at this ſummons: ſhe dreaded the reproaches conſcious guilt told her ſhe merited, and with tardy ſteps deſcended to the parlour, where ſhe was, in ſome meaſure, relieved by Hartland's acquainting

acquainting her he was obliged to quit the Lodge, in order to tranſact ſome important buſineſs in Ireland, and therefore under the neceſſity of ſending her back to the Hamlet.

Patty gueſſed the motives which made him quit it; for, from his violent agitation, as he ſpoke, it was evident to her the plot againſt Matilda had ſucceeded.

She wiſhed to inform Bromley of the ſudden change at the Lodge; but without being diſcovered, ſhe found it impoſſible to do ſo: ſhe was obliged inſtantly to prepare for her departure, as the carriage was already at the door, which was to convey her home. After ſhe had packed up her things, ſhe repaired to Matilda's chamber, who was juſt putting on her habit, but ſo weak and ill ſhe could ſcarcely ſupport herſelf; and even the callous nature of Patty

was affected by her altered countenance; it was a tranſient ſenſibility however, which was ſoon loſt in ſelf-concern for the many pleaſures ſhe might have enjoyed if ſtill retained by Hartland.

Though had ſhe heard, indeed, the Iriſh were rather a wild ſet of people, ſhe would notwithſtanding have been happy to continue with Mrs. Hartland, ſhe ſaid, who was ſuch a dear friend to her, that even on the top of a bleak mountain ſhe would be happy in hercompany.—This hint was not regarded by Matilda: though ſhe ſuſpected not the principles of Patty, ſhe had long ſeen that ſhe neither poſſeſſed ſteadineſs nor feeling, and found her, inſtead of an agreeable companion, a heavy burden ſhe was glad to be delivered from.

She gave her a letter for Mr. Belmore, and charged her to aſſure him ſhe was well

—happy

—happy ſhe would have added—but her emotions overcame her, and prevented her articulating what was ſo untrue.

The appearance of the maid with chocolate made her check her tears; and the carriage being ready, Patty, with ſome ſemblance of affliction, received her adieu, and departed.

The travelling coach ſoon after drew up: Hartland handed her into it, and they ſet off with velocity, attended by two grooms, and followed by another carriage, in which was her maid and his valet. Hartland was more gentle than ſhe expected, and ſhe endeavoured to appear cheerful; but her efforts to do ſo were unavailing, torn as her heart was, by anguiſh at her removal from Belmore.

" Is this the happineſs (thought ſhe) he expected to derive from me, as a recom-

pence for all his cares? Alas! inſtead of ſmoothing the pillow of his age, I have ſtrewed it with thorns; and all the grief he ſuffered by my parents, is now revived by their unfortunate child!"

Had ſhe been in another frame of mind, her preſent journey would have been delightful to her; but now ſhe paſſed through a romantic and charming country, without paying any attention to the varied and beautiful ſcenes it preſented to her view. After a journey of three days, they arrived late at night, at ———, from whence they were to embark. Worn out with fatigue, for they had travelled with little intermiſſion, Matilda was conducted to her chamber, where ſhe had ſcarcely power to taſte the refreſhments offered to her, and ſoon ſunk into a happy forgetfulneſs of every care.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

" She is mournful
" In her ſteps, and lifts her blue
" Eyes towards Erin."

OSSIAN.

WHEN ſhe awoke in the morning, ſhe found Hartland ſitting by her bedſide: he had long indeed been contemplating her; and as he gazed upon her, he could ſcarcely help thinking her ſoul was as innocent as her countenance; but when all the circumſtances which had excited his jealouſy

recurred to his imagination, he ſighed to think that was impoſſible; and in the bitterneſs of his ſpirit, ſoftly exclaimed,

" Oh! what a woman hadſt thou been,
" If half thy outward graces had been plac'd
" About the thoughts and counſels of thy heart!"

He told Matilda the wind was favourable, and hoped ſhe was ſufficiently reſted to undertake the voyage. She immediately aſſured him ſhe was, and he retired to ſend the maid to attend her. From the window ſhe ſaw a new and buſy ſcene: paſſengers landing and embarking rendered the place quite alive. Hitherto accuſtomed to an inland ſituation, ſhe felt a degree of awful aſtoniſhment at beholding the vaſt expanſe of waters now ſtretched before her, and which gave her ideas of the ſublimity of nature, ſhe had never before experienced; the novelty

velty of every thing around her, imperceptibly amuſed her thoughts, and ſhe joined Hartland at breakfaſt with ſome degree of cheerfulneſs.

They embarked about the middle of the day, and all thoſe melancholy reflexions which hurry had a little diſſipated, returned with full force to the mind of Matilda: ſhe ſtaid on deck, ſtraining her eyes towards the ſpot ſhe had juſt quitted, even when it was no longer diſcernible, agonized by the uncertainty of her return to England, the idea of the events which in the interim might happen to embitter that return, and the grief of Belmore at her ſeparation from him: at length a violent dizzineſs ſeized her head, and ſhe was compelled to retire to the little cabin, where her bed was prepared; here ſhe felt the moſt excruciating ſickneſs, aggravated by the want of repoſe,

which the inceſſant noiſe of the veſſel, and the daſhing of the waves againſt its ſides, totally precluded.

The afternoon of the ſecond day Hartland entered her cabin, and taking her hand, wiſhed her joy of her having finiſhed her voyage: the ſhip, he ſaid, was at anchor, and the boat ready to carry her on ſhore.

Matilda inſtantly roſe, rejoiced at the proſpect of being freed from ſickneſs and fatigue.

It was now about the duſk of the evening, and, notwithſtanding ſhe was wrapped up in a warm coat, the ſeverity of the air almoſt froze her; and the déſolate proſpect ſhe beheld of rocks and frightful precipices, impending over the ſea, and which gave her a moſt melancholy idea of the country ſhe was about entering into, chilled her ſpirits and overwhelmed her with dejection.

On

On their landing, they were ſurrounded by a number of poor people, dreſſed in an uncouth manner, and ſpeaking a language ſhe did not underſtand: the only words ſhe could comprehend, were "the meaſter, the meaſter." Hartland informed her they were his tenants, who had been in daily expectation of his coming: he had, indeed, from almoſt the commencement of his diſpleaſure againſt Matilda, projected bringing her to Ireland, and wrote to his Steward to inform him of his intended viſit.

The road they were to go was too rugged to permit any carriage to go over it; ſo leaning on Hartland's arm, ſhe proceeded, with tottering ſteps, and attended by the crowd who had met them on the ſtrand. As they proceeded, Matilda was ſurpriſed by the ſight of two or three ſtrange little buildings, compoſed of ſtones and clay,

and

and emitting whole volumes of ſmoke: ſhe enquired what they were deſigned for, and was informed, habitations for the natives.—"Bleſs me," thought Matilda, "what can be expected from creatures inhabiting ſuch places?"

"You are not," ſaid Hartland, with an ill-natured ſmile, "to expect to find here, any of your paſtoral cottages, covered with woodbines and jeſſamine—thoſe huts anſwer the purpoſes of life extremely well; and I hope you will not be diſſatisfied, if you are brought to a dwelling not much better."—She was ſilent: a ſecret fear pervaded her ſoul, that ſhe was in the hands of a man who would make her feel the full extent of his power.

They at laſt reached a great court-yard: the large gate was double-locked and barred, while a ſmaller one being half demoliſhed, rendered

rendered the ſecurity of the other, if danger threatened, quite unavailing.

The court, like the field of the ſlothful, was overgrown with weeds and brambles; and every ſtep Matilda took ſhe was incommoded by briers and thiſtles, which tore her clothes and wounded her feet:—thoſe difficulties ſurmounted, ſhe gained a flight of ſteps almoſt perpendicular, by which ſhe aſcended to the ſmall door of an old building.

On entering the hall, an old woman, dreſſed ſomething like one of the witches of Macbeth, in a jargon ſcarcely intelligible, welcomed her and Hartland, and ſaid her huſband Thady had been out in his little ſkiff the whole day, a watching for them, "Aye, God bleſs him! looking out to ſee them before there was a glimmer of light." Matilda was led into a great wild

wild-looking parlour, where Hartland kiſſing her, bid her welcome to the Iriſh ſhore.—The wide yawning fire-place was heaped up with turf, the warmth of which was very grateful to Matilda, had not the ſmoke perpetually incommoded her. Hartland aſked the old dame, if ſhe had no comfortable cordial for her miſtreſs? She ſaid, "by her faith and by St. Patrick, ſhe had a drop of choice whiſkey, which father O'Flannaghan bought himſelf for her; and if the ſweet ſoul would take a ſup of it, ſhe ſhould be as welcome to it as her mother's milk."

Hartland ſmiled, but Matilda refuſed the offered kindneſs. Some ſailors, almoſt at that moment, arrived with hampers of wine and other refreſhments, which Hartland, in order to prevent any trouble or inquiries, had brought along with him. From the ap-

appearance of the parlour, Matilda formed no advantageous opinion of the reſt of the manſion; it was lined with oak which was disjointed by time, and in many places admitted a cold and whiſtling wind: the few chairs and tables were alſo of oak, but ſo clumſy and broken they could ſcarcely be moved: one glaſs, in a frame, originally white, but now completely blackened, was ſo hung between the heavy windows, as to threaten deſtruction on the head of any perſon whoſe ventureſome vanity would lead them near it. Matilda was placed in a great chair by the fire, yet half periſhed by the cold, as every door was left wide open, and the few domeſtics of the manſion running backward and forward in much hurry and confuſion to prepare ſupper, when at laſt it was brought in; the uncommon quantity of proviſions greatly ſurpriſed her.

her. The old woman, indeed, from the firſt information of her maſter's viſit, had been preparing for his reception, ſo that ſhe now ſent in, of hot and cold, ſufficient to entertain a whole corporation.

The court was crowded with peaſants, amongſt whom money was diſtributed to procure liquor, as were alſo the proviſions after Hartland and Matilda had ſupped.

Hartland allowed Matilda to retire early to her chamber: it was over the parlour, and equally wild and uncomfortable. She was uſhered to it by the old woman, and followed by her maid, whoſe looks were expreſſive of diſcontent and ill-humour. The former would have entered into converſation, had not the latter pertly deſired her to withdraw. As ſoon as ſhe ſhut the door of the room, ſhe exclaimed, "Dear me, Mem, my maſter has brought us amongſt

a ſet of ſalvides:—bleſs me, Mem, if I had a ſuſpection where I was coming to, I ſhould have refuſed, though to be ſure I ſhould be always commencely happy to ſerve your Ladyſhip; but then one might as well live amongſt Turks and Heathens, as amongſt theſe wild Iriſh, who do not ſpeak a word of Engliſh.—I juſt aſked for a little cordial or drops, or ſomething or other comfortable to revive me, after my ſickneſs and qualms, and they brought me a great glaſs of whiſkey, as if I was quite a common creature, like themſelves; and to be ſure, Mem, I can't bear the idear of ſuch things."

Much more ſhe would have ſaid, had not the entrance of her maſter ſtopped her, and ſhe retired to exhilarate her ſpirits with a little of the wine which lay in the hall.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

———" Thy halls are ſilent,—
" There is no ſound in the woods,—
" The wave tumbles alone on the
" Coaſt.

OSSIAN.

THIS Iriſh eſtate of Hartland's was extenſive, but in many places ſo wild and uncultivated, that the income was ſmall ariſing from it. It was the paternal fortune of his mother: during her life-time the family conſtantly viſited it, and kept up ſome

ſome order and neatneſs in the houſe and contiguous grounds; but from the time ſhe died theſe viſits ceaſed, and it had been totally neglected.

About ſeven miles from it was a ſmall town, in which a few genteel families reſided; and at the other ſide, about four miles off, was a fort, where three or four companies were generally quartered. There were no familes nearer than the town, with whom any intercourſe could be kept up, ſo that it was perfectly adapted for privacy and ſecluſion.

Here Hartland deſigned to ſequeſter Matilda till he ſhould have reaſon to think the dangerous propenſities he ſuſpected her of harbouring, were eradicated from her mind. His own ſolitude he meant to diverſify by excurſions to the neighbouring town, where, in the ſummer ſeaſon particularly, he was certain of amuſement.

The

The next morning after breakfaſt, Matilda availed herſelf of his abſence to ramble over her new habitation; and, after innumerable aſcents and deſcents of winding ſtone ſtairs, into dark galleries, and wild, gloomy apartments, ſhe returned to her chamber, glad to find herſelf with whole limbs again there. The ground about the houſe was rugged and barren; from the front was an extenſive view of the ocean and its rocky boundaries; behind was a garden and orchard. To theſe Matilda deſcended, as ſoon as ſhe had recovered from the fatigue which attended her preambulation about the houſe; but again found, as is generally the caſe, the expectation of pleaſure, damped by difficulties: ſhe could ſcarcely force herſelf through the walks, they were ſo overgrown with high graſs and weeds, and choaked by the entangled boughs

boughs of little fruit-trees, which had been allowed to ſhoot out in luxuriant wildneſs; the beds of flowers were ſpoiled by the fowl and other domeſtic animals, which were allowed to range promiſcuouſly amongſt them; the wall which ſurrounded the orchard and garden was broken and rugged; veſtiges of bowers and green-houſes were yet perceivable, but they only inſpired the mind with melancholy ideas of that decay to which thoſe to whom they had owed their erection, were now reduced.

The motives for bringing her to this cheerleſs place, now became obvious to Matilda; ſhe found ſhe was here to be a perfect recluſe, and endeavoured to ſummon her fortitude to her aid to bear her confinement without repining. Could ſhe be aſſured of Mr. Belmore's health and happineſs, ſhe thought ſhe could ſupport it with

with reſignation; but the ignorance ſhe dreaded ſhe ſhould be kept in concerning him, for Hartland had prohibited her writing to him, together with the idea of his grief at their ſeparation, cruelly agitated her mind, and precluded all hopes of remote tranquillity. Her dejection at dinner did not eſcape his notice. Hartland told her, he ſhould ſhortly expect to ſee her reſtored to cheerfulneſs. "You know," cried he, "I am already acquainted with your paſſion for old buildings; I hope, therefore, the indulgence I have ſhown you, in bringing you to this one, will be rewarded with cheerfulneſs."

This ſarcaſtic hint drew a tear from Matilda, but ſhe diſdained replying to it. In the courſe of the evening he partly revealed his intentions reſpecting her, and told her ſhe muſt be content with retirement as long

long as he pleaſed to have her remain in it: her books were brought to amuſe her, and ſhe might walk out whenever ſhe pleaſed, he ſaid. She aſſured him, ſhe had no idea of oppoſing his will; "Solitude," cried ſhe, "can never be irkſome to a rational and innocent mind."

He laughed deridingly as ſhe ſpoke, and for the remainder of the evening reſumed his good humour.

CHAP. XVIII.

" He begg'd relief
" With tears, the dumb petitioners of grief."

DRYDEN.

MATILDA ſoon found herſelf totally deſerted, as Hartland took up his reſidence in the town already mentioned, not from inclination, but a hope of mortifying Matilda by his apparent neglect, and thus being revenged, in ſome degree, for the inquietude ſhe made him ſuffer.

Spring

Spring was juſt beginning, and Matilda's mind being often too unſettled to permit her to work or read, ſhe ſpent much of her time in rambling about: when the weather was mild, the beach was her favourite walk: ſhe liked to liſten to the gentle daſhing of the water amongſt the rocks, or ſit amongſt their natural grottos, and think on paſt events. The wretchedneſs of the peaſants filled her with pity, and often checked that diſcontent which involuntarily aroſe in her mind, at reflecting on her own ſituation. "There is," ſhe would exclaim, "impiety in repining, when I behold ſo many creatures in the extremes of want, and even with cheerfulneſs bearing 'the pelting of the pitileſs ſtorm:' the God of nature has to me been good; many of the comforts of life are yet within my reach, and in my mind, I truſt, are reſources againſt adverſity."

She was ſitting, one morning, on the ſunny fragment of a rock, when ſhe ſaw a youth, who ſeemed about ſixteen, approaching her, meanly habited, and with every appearance of want and wretchedneſs about him; his bare legs, in many places, were wounded by the flints; he had a ſatchel at his back, and in his hand an open paper, which he preſented to her; ſhe received it in ſilent wonder, and read the following lines:

" Pity the ſorrows of an helpleſs youth,
" Whoſe morn of life is ſicklied o'er by care!
" A heart replete with innocence and truth,
" Now begs a meed to ſave it from deſpair.

" Not for himſelf, alone, he ſeeks your aid;
" The wants of others make him plead their cauſe;
" Your charity by Heaven will be repaid,
" Then yield! oh yield! to ſweet Compaſſion's laws!

" The prayer of Gratitude will then aſcend
" To Heaven, to keep thee from Affliction's dart;
" That Heaven which ſmiles when humble ſuitors bend,
" And loves the incenſe of a pious heart."

Theſe

Theſe ſimple lines excited the ſenſibility of Matilda. After peruſing them, ſhe aſked, in a gentle voice, who he was? He ſaid, "a poor ſcholar," and explained that term, by acquainting her it implied a perſon who travelled about the country, and begged their learning as well as their food. To his rambles, however, a lamentable misfortune had lately put a ſtop.—Matilda, as ſhe took out her purſe, inquired into the nature of the misfortune he alluded to.

He informed her his father was a fiſherman, who had ſupported a large family, in peace and comfort; but, unfortunately venturing out ſome months back in a ſtorm, was loſt. His mother, overcome by grief for ſo great a loſs, gradually declined, till at laſt ſhe was unable to leave her bed.—The family then loſt all means of ſubſiſting; and he, at laſt, with a hope of alleviating

their wants, had penned the petition he had preſented to her, which, as yet, had not procured them the relief they required.

Matilda inquired where his mother lived. He pointed to a deſolate field, at the extremity of a long ridge of rocks, and ſhe inſtantly roſe to accompany him thither; but firſt put a guinea into his hand, and told him ſhe would take care to preſerve both him and his family from ſuch diſtreſs as they had lately experienced.

He received the money with a ſenſation of ſurpriſe and delight, which ſo overpowered his ſpirits, that he burſt into tears. Matilda was affected by this teſtimony of feeling, and felt the moſt exquiſite happineſs at the proſpect of relieving the wants of others.

They ſoon reached the hut: as ſhe put her foot on the threſhold, ſhe involuntarily ſtarted

ſtarted back, half ſuffocated by the thick ſmoke; but, reſolved no inconvenience ſhould impede her humanity, ſhe again ventured to ſtep within the manſion of wretchedneſs. On entering it, ſhe perceived, upon a dirty heap of ſtraw, the emaciated form of a poor woman, whoſe head was ſupported by a ſickly girl; three other children, half naked, were ſitting cloſe to a turf fire; and beſide them, on a little ſtool, ſat a young woman, with an infant in her lap.

She ſtarted up on Matilda's entrance, and they ſeemed mutually aſtoniſhed by the appearance of each other.

The ſtranger, though dreſſed in poor apparel, was perfectly neat; her face was lovely, and her perſon truly elegant: the pity which beamed from the eyes of Matilda ſeemed to penetrate her ſoul. When

Matilda had recovered the ſhock ſhe ſuſtained by ſeeing ſo many miſerable objects together, ſhe ſaid, "I came hither, not to intrude on diſtreſs, but, if poſſible, to adminiſter comfort to it." "Your countenance," ſaid the young woman, "is ſufficient to denote the motive which brings you hither. Here, indeed, are objects calculated to excite compaſſion." She then, in a brief and pathetic manner, recounted the little ſtory which Matilda had already heard from the young petitioner:—"Pity," ſhe concluded, "is all in my power to beſtow; and though my inclination to do good may ſerve me in Heaven, it can be of little uſe here on earth to theſe poor creatures."

"I hope," ſaid Matilda, "by uniting ability to inclination, we ſhall ſoon reſtore this good woman and her family to comfort." She now ſaw the poor ſcholar whiſpering

pering the ſtranger, and ſoon learned he was going to purchaſe bread and drink at a ſmall houſe near the hut, which ſupplied many of the ruſtics with theſe commodities.

Matilda deſired him to call upon her in the courſe of the day, promiſing to have a bundle of clothes, and other comfortable things, provided for him to bring to his family.

She then quitted the hut, inviting the ſtranger, whoſe looks and manner had highly prepoſſeſſed her in her favour, to accompany her home, which ſhe readily conſented to do. In their way thither, Matilda ſaid ſhe could not help imagining ſhe had not long been an inhabitant of this lonely place.

"Not very long," replied the other, with a deep ſigh, and a look which evidently proved misfortunes had led her to it.

Matilda, whoſe tender heart made her feel intereſted about all whom ſhe thought unhappy, and who flattered herſelf, by cultivating an intimacy with this young woman, ſhe might be able to lighten the ſorrows ſhe ſeemed to feel, expreſſed a hope of often being favoured with her company.

"You do me honour," cried ſhe, "by your invitation, which I gratefully accept, as the idea of enjoying the ſociety of ſo amiable a countrywoman, gives to me a pleaſure I have not for a long time before experienced." "You came from England, then?" ſaid Matilda. She replied ſhe did; and, after a little deſultory converſation about that kingdom, inquired in what part of it Matilda had reſided? On Matilda's informing her, ſhe ſtarted—the colour left her cheeks—ſhe claſped her hands, and betrayed the greateſt emotion. "Good Heaven!

Heaven!" ſhe exclaimed, "from the Hamlet! You are then, in all probability, acquainted with Aſhmore!" "Yes," replied Matilda, ſurpriſed at her agitation, "I know him, and think him one of the moſt amiable of men."—"Amiable!" repeated her companion,—"he is excellence itſelf! and never ſhall I ceaſe lamenting being the cauſe of ſo much ſorrow to him!"

It inſtantly occurred to Matilda that this was the young perſon who had fallen a victim to the wiles of Bromley:—delicacy, however, made her check and wiſh to conceal the feelings this conjecture gave riſe to—her expreſſive countenance, however, betrayed them. The young ſtranger, after a momentary ſilence, took her hand, as if involuntarily, and looking at her with a kind of mournful earneſtneſs, exclaimed,

"Ah! if am not much miſtaken, you are not ignorant of my name—you are not ignorant that I am a being, whoſe unhappy fate Mr. Aſhmore inceſſantly mourns."

"I believe I am not," ſaid Matilda, in a timid accent, and raiſing her eyes from the ground, on which they had hitherto been bent. "You acknowledge then you have heard of the unfortunate Lucy Woodville, the ſource of ſorrow to all who loved her." Matilda did not attempt to deny ſhe had. Miſs Woodville now dropped her hand, and burſt into an agony of tears, which ſeemed cauſed by the recollection of paſt events, while Matilda, with the ſofteſt pity, tried to ſoothe her.

When her agitation had a little ſubſided, ſhe briefly informed Matilda, that the idea of remaining in England, where the deſtroyer of her happineſs lived, was ſo inſupportable

portable to her, as to determine her to quit that kingdom.

She contrived to hear of, and get acquainted with a woman who was coming to ſettle in the neighbourhood of Hartland's Iriſh ſeat, of which ſhe had often heard from Mr. Aſhmore; and, from its loneline ſs, thought it well adapted for the purpoſes of ſecluſion. To this woman ſhe pretended ſhe was ſo reduced and embarraſſed by unforeſeen misfortunes, as to be obliged to ſequeſter herſelf in another country.

By her means ſhe was ſettled at a tolerably good farm-houſe near the Caſtle, where ſhe obtained a bare ſubſiſtence by her own induſtry. The diſtreſs of the poor fiſherman's widow had agonized her heart, ſhe ſaid, particularly as ſhe had not the power of relieving it.

Though ſhe had never ſeen Mr. Hartland, ſhe ſaid, ſhe was well acquainted with him, from

from deſcription, and knew he had heard the melancholy incidents of her life.

She made Matilda promiſe not to acquaint him of her being in his neighbourhood; to this promiſe Matilda made no objection, but would gladly have waved a ſimilar one, relative to Aſhmore: in the courſe of a little time, however, ſhe truſted ſhe ſhould be able to prevail on the fair Lucy to let him be informed of her reſidence, as the knowledge of her ſafety, Matilda knew, would remove a load of anxiety from his heart.

Matilda now, in her turn, gave ſome account of herſelf, and of the reaſons which prompted Aſhmore to divulge Lucy's ſtory to her.

"Be aſſured," cried Lucy, "to apologize for his doing ſo is unneceſſary. I know the goodneſs of his nature, and that, without

out urgent motives, he never would publiſh either the vices or follies of a fellow-creature."

She refuſed dining with Matilda, alledging that the poor people at the farm would be waiting for her; ſhe readily however conſented to ſpend the evening with her new friend.

Mutually pleaſed, they parted, not a little delighted at their unexpected meeting and diſcovery of each other.

Matilda was not long at home ere the poor ſcholar arrived: ſhe loaded him with things for his family, and promiſed to ſettle a weekly penſion on his mother, ſufficient to preſerve her from diſtreſs.

She ſat down to dinner with a lighter heart than ſhe had felt ſince ſhe left England; elated at the proſpect of ſociety congenial to her feelings, and yet more

elated

elated at the idea of having filled the hungry mouth, and given gladneſs to the widow's heart.

Lucy came to her early; the more they converſed, the more intereſted they felt about each other.

Matilda informed Lucy ſhe was much alone. Lucy regarded her for a few minutes with tearful eyes—"Good heaven!" ſhe then ſaid, "it fills me with wonder, that a man in poſſeſſion of ſuch an angel ſhould neglect her!—but the beſt of us are full of inconſiſtencies."

It was ſettled, whenever Hartland was abſent ſhe ſhould be with Matilda; acquainted with every pleaſant and romantic ſpot about the place, they propoſed many delightful rambles together.

From this time they were ſcarcely aſunder, Hartland coming ſeldom to the Caſtle, and

and then merely making a flying viſit:—none of the families he aſſociatad with ever ſuppoſed his wife had come over with him; and he enjoyed the idea of the uneaſineſs he imagined his neglect and deſertion muſt give her.

In friendſhip and benevolence, however, her innocent ſoul found reſources to defeat the malicious ſchemes he had laid againſt her peace.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

"The white wave roared againſt its rocks; ſad Oithona ſat
"on the coaſt; ſhe looked on the rolling waters, and
"her tears deſcend: but when ſhe ſaw Gaul in his arms,
"ſhe ſtarted, and turned her eyes away. Her lovely
"cheek is bent and red, her white arm trembles by her
"ſide: Thrice ſhe ſtrove to fly from his preſence; but
"her ſteps failed her as ſhe went."

OSSIAN.

THE poor family at the hut were ſoon reſtored to health and happineſs, and the young ſcholar, by Matilda's direction, ſet up a little ſchool:—ſhe paid for the inſtruction

ſtruction of a number of poor children in her neighbourhood, whoſe parents were unable to do ſo; rejoiced to think they would now be in ſome degree enlightened, as their extreme ignorance had frequently ſhocked her. She thought it dreadful that a human creature ſhould be brought up without ſome ideas of religion and humanity.

Lucy was a moſt delightful companion, ſenſible and entertaining; for, though unfortunate, ſhe had no guilt to reproach herſelf with, and often diſplayed a cheerfulneſs which raiſed the languid ſpirits of Matilda.

They were walking one fine morning among the rocks, when Lucy laughing, ſuddenly exclaimed—"The fringed curtains of thine eyes advance, and ſee who comes yonder!" Matilda pauſed, and looking up, perceived a man at ſome diſtance,

in

in regimentals, ſcrambling over the rocks. "That (ſaid Lucy) is one of the officers quartered at the fort; the poor man has certainly loſt his wits, his fortune, or his miſtreſs, for he is the moſt melancholy creature I ever beheld, though I can aſſure you extremely handſome; I have frequently met him in my ſolitary rambles, wandering about the beach, or amongſt the rocks; and though you may think there was cauſe for terror, in meeting ſuch a fine young fellow, in a place where the Lord knows what might have happened, I aſſure you I never had reaſon for any palpitation, as I don't ſuppoſe he knew whether I was a ſea-nymph, or an old witch."

The gentleman had now advanced pretty near them:—Lucy whiſpered to Matilda to obſerve how handſome he was. Matilda careleſsly glanced at him; but who can ſpeak

the

the emotions that glance occaſioned? ſhe ſcreamed—ſhe ſtarted back—it was Howard himſelf whom ſhe beheld!—Howard, at once ſuch an object of *terror* and *eſteem!*—who ſeemed perpetually wandering in her path to revive ideas ſhe wiſhed to ſuppreſs,—ideas which gave to her the moſt painful diſquietude.

Her ſcream rouſed him from a deep reverie, in which he appeared to have been plunged. The emotions he manifeſted at this moment were not inferior to theſe ſhe betrayed; his colour changed—he became motionleſs, and looked at her as if doubting the evidence of his eyes.

He was ſoon, however, convinced they had not deceived him—he ſaw the lovely being from whom his thoughts never wandered, weak, trembling, almoſt ſinking before him; he wiſhed to fly to her, to ſupport her

her drooping head upon his boſom, and pour forth all the fulneſs of his ſoul; but he checked this impulſe of paſſionate tenderneſs, and, after a few minutes heſitation, turned away with a lingering look, expreſſive of unutterable agony; and deſcending amongſt the rocks, immediately diſappeared.

Lucy, fearful Matilda would faint, obliged her to ſit down—tears in a ſhort time, relieved her heart, but Howard's image was ſtill preſent to her view. Lucy, full of penetration, inſtantly conjectured this young officer had been more than a ſlight acquaintance: ſhe would not touch, however, upon a chord which ſhe was convinced could not bear vibration; ſhe therefore pretended to think it was fatigue had overpowered her friend.

Matilda,

Matilda, who dreaded to mention the name of Howard, was highly pleaſed at Lucy's ſilence reſpecting him. His preſence had given a ſhock to her tranquillity, which ſhe could not eaſily overcome, and filled her with fears, leſt Hartland's unhappy ſuſpicions ſhould be ſtrengthened, if he diſcovered he was in the neighbourhood; as ſhe well knew, "that trifles light as air are, to the jealous, confirmation ſtrong as proofs of Holy Writ." She determined to do all in her power to convince him theſe ſuſpicions were ill-founded; and for this purpoſe, as well as to avoid the chance of another interview with a perſon whom ſhe could not behold without the moſt painful emotions, ſhe reſolved, in future, to confine her rambles to the orchard and garden, which had latterly been rendered more pleaſant by the removal of the weeds and brambles

brambles that had choaked up their avenues.

Here the faithful Lucy, who now began to develope her delicate ſituation, ſtill attended her, endeavouring to baniſh her dejection, and make her think on days of future happineſs.

A ſudden change in the weather confined them entirely within doors; the dreadful ſtorms filled the heart of Matilda with terror and apprehenſions about the veſſels which ſhe ſo frequently ſaw toſſed upon the foaming waves. The hurricane raged one night with frightful violence. A ſhip, towards the decline of day, had been ſeen near the coaſt, for the ſafety of which the moſt ſerious fears were entertained. The horrid idea of its danger, baniſhed ſleep from Matilda; and about day-break a violent noiſe, both within and without the houſe

houſe made her riſe precipitately, and deſcend to the hall, where ſhe had heard, as ſhe apprehended, that the veſſel was wrecked, and but a few of the paſſengers ſaved.

Her anxiety to aid thoſe miſerable objects, made her exert herſelf to overcome the ſhock which this dreadful intelligence gave her; and being informed that ſome of the paſſengers were carried to the farm where Lucy lodged, ſhe rolled herſelf up in her cloak, and ordering the domeſtics to bring wine and other reviving refreſhments after her, proceeded thither directly.

In her way ſhe beheld ſeveral of the ruſtics running alternately to and from the beach in ſuch confuſion and diſmay as ſcarcely permitted them to render the aſſiſtance that was required from them.

The conſternation and diſtreſs viſible in the countenance of Lucy, who beheld her approaching the houſe, and met her at the

door, was naturally imputed by Matilda to the recent event; but Lucy ſoon undeceived her, ſnatching her hand, and burſting into tears, ſhe exclaimed, "Oh! Mrs. Hartland, how awful are the ways of Providence!—the baſe betrayer of my honour is this moment ſnatched from the rage of the ſea, and now in the next room.

Aghaſt at this intelligence, Matilda ſtared wildly at her!—"Surely," cried ſhe, "you cannot mean Bromley?"—"Yes, he was one amongſt the few whom the bravery of the fiſhermen ſaved from periſhing. I ſaw him borne to the next room without ſenſe or motion. The poor people have ſent off for a ſurgeon belonging to the regiment at the fort; but ere he arrives, Bromley, I think, will be tolerably recovered, for he has already ſpoken."

"Wretched man!" cried Matilda, "wonderfully, indeed, are his ſchemes fruſtrated!

fruſtrated! for that inſidious ſchemes were bringing him to Ireland, I much fear. —His preſervation, I hope, will be followed by compunction, and a wiſh of making reparation for the evils he has committed."

Deeply engaged in conjectures, they continued together till the woman of the houſe, came from the inner room, and ſaid, the gentleman had quite recovered his ſenſes; enquired where he was; and, on being informed, aſked if Mr. Hartland's houſe was not near? I told him it was, ſaid the good woman: upon which he aſked a power of queſtions about you and the 'Squire, Madam, (addreſſing herſelf to Matilda); and on hearing you were in the next room to him, he expreſſed the greateſt joy, and begged, for the love of Heaven, I would come out to you, and entreat you to let him ſpeak to you for a few minutes, as he

believed he was dying, and had a weight upon his heart which nothing but a converſation with you could lighten. Matilda heſitated to comply with this requeſt, but the woman continuing to preſs her, and Lucy joining in the ſupplication, ſhe at laſt yielded, and was conducted to Bromley.

As ſhe approached the bed on which he lay, ſhe involuntarily ſhrunk back:—his wild and ghaſtly looks, in which life and death ſeemed ſtruggling, added to her horror and deteſtation of him.

"I wonder not," ſaid he, in a faint voice, "that you ſhrink at beholding me; but I am puniſhed as I deſerve, for deſtroying your tranquillity, and have only been preſerved from the overwhelming billows to die before you, the moſt contrite of men."

Bromley, as is often the caſe with the volatile and the wicked, had not power or fortitude

fortitude to ſupport danger: the fatigue and fright, occaſioned by the ſhipwreck, had reduced him to a ſtate of weakneſs he imagined the ſure ſymptom of approaching death:—his ſins recurred in full force to his memory; and to confeſs the plots he had contrived againſt Matilda's reputation, he hoped, would be the means of making his peace with Heaven which he had ſo often offended.

He beſought Matilda to approach nearer to him, and when ſhe complied, he briefly informed her of the ſchemes he had contrived, in concert with the wife of Howard, and Patty, againſt her. Shocked at this narration, Matilda could not ſuppreſs the indignation of her ſoul, which he perceiving, exclaimed, "Be not inexorable! Oh! let the prayers of purity like thine, be offered to Heaven for me!—I have expoſed

my heart to your view! its errors were great, but its penitence is ſincere: let that penitence induce you to forgive the former." "'Tis not ſufficient, Mr. Bromley," Matilda replied, "that your errors are confeſſed to me; they muſt alſo be acknowledged by you to Mr. Hartland, as the only means of reinſtating me in his good opinion, which your artifices deprived me of: your doing ſo, will be ſome kind of atonement for the unhappineſs you have made me ſuffer. Bromley, in the zeal of his contrition, promiſed to do whatever ſhe deſired; and Matilda roſe, with an intention of diſpatching a meſſenger immediately for her huſband. Bromley, as if there was comfort in gazing on her, ſtill detained her. "You have not aſked me," he cried, "what brought me to Ireland? I own I came elevated with the hope of at length, triumphing

umphing in the completion of my ſchemes againſt you. I was accompanied by a woman—I now ſhudder to think of—the lovely and unfortunate Julia.—She heard that Howard was quartered near your manſion, and ſhe reſolved, if he ſtill perſiſted in refuſing to receive her, to try and compel him to do ſo, by accuſing you as the perſon who prevented him: the wave that threatened me with death, has involved her in deſtruction--I ſaw her white hands extended for relief, but the billows burſt over her devoted head, and ſhe ſunk for ever!" "What!" exclaimed Matilda, ſtarting from her ſeat, "has Julia, has the wife of Howard periſhed? Merciful Heaven! perhaps ſhe yet lives—perhaps I may yet preſerve her!" Pale and wild, ſhe ruſhed out of the room, eagerly inquiring whether any female had been taken up. She was informed that the

body of a woman had juſt been thrown by the waves upon the beach, from whence it was conveyed to a neighbouring cottage. On their pointing out the houſe, ſhe flew thither, followed by the affrighted Lucy.

The room ſhe entered was crowded with ruſtics; on a bed was laid the body they had juſt found: ſome women were employed in taking off the wet garments, and others were warming blankets to roll about it. Matilda approached—ſhe caſt a glance at the face, and inſtantly conjectured it was the beautiful form of Julia ſhe beheld.

A deadly ſickneſs ſeized her—her ſoul ſhuddered at the diſaſtrous fate of an object once ſo dear to the heart of Howard; ſhe ſunk into a chair, and for ſome minutes was unable to move.

The attentions of Lucy at laſt recovered her. She would have led her from this melancholy

lancholy ſcene, but Matilda refuſed to retire: —"No," ſaid ſhe, "we will pay the laſt ſad rites of humanity to the poor ſufferer." She aſſiſted the women in chafing the body, and wrapping it in blankets; but no ſymptoms of returning life appeared, and Matilda was convinced the animating ſpirit had fled from it for ever. The ſurgeon was now announced: he was accompanied by ſome officers, whom a mixture of curioſity and compaſſion had brought from the fort. Matilda roſe from the bed at their entrance, and in retiring from it, beheld Howard near the door, his eyes fixed on her. The colour, which had long forſaken her cheeks, in a moment returned, and haſtily averting her eyes, ſhe addreſſed Lucy, though in accents that were not articulate.

To behold her was the only pleaſure Howard could experience; the diſtreſs he

ſaw his preſence excited, prevailed on him, however, to relinquiſh this gratification; and he was withdrawing from the room, when the ſurgeon, by declaring the lady was paſt recovery, detained him, and ſome exclamations of admiration and pity from the officers drew him to the bed: he looked on the lovely form before him—he ſtarted and turned pale—again he looked, retreated, and ſeemed gaſping for breath—a film appeared to overſpread his eyes—he tottered, and would have fallen to the earth, had not an officer caught him in his arms, and ſupported him to a ſeat.

How at this moment was the gentle ſoul of Matilda torn by anguiſh! Scarcely could the rigid rules of propriety withhold her from flying to Howard, and aiding his recovery. He raiſed his drooping head in a ſhort time, and riſing again, advanced to the bed; he hung over the body with an expreſſion of

of unutterable ſorrow, and folding his hands together, exclaimed: " 'Tis ſhe, indeed! —poor Julia!" As he ſpoke, a tear fell from him on her pallid cheek. The ſobs of Matilda now reached his ear: he haſtily looked towards her, and beheld her reclining on the boſom of Lucy. This ſight recalled Howard's wandering ſenſes; he grew more tranquil; and turning to his companions, who were watching him with ſurpriſe, ſaid in an emphatic manner, the lady had been a very dear friend of his. He then deſired them not to delay returning to the fort, as he wiſhed to ſettle every thing concerning her interment ere his departure: they accordingly accompanied the ſurgeon to viſit ſuch of the ſufferers as could receive benefit from his aſſiſtance, and the room was ſhortly cleared of all, except Matilda, Lucy, and two women belonging to the cottage.

To theſe women Howard then gave money, and beſought them to provide every thing requiſite for a plain and decent funeral, againſt the enſuing evening, promiſing, at that time to return himſelf to attend it. They aſſured him his directions ſhould be punctually obeyed, and left the room to diſpatch meſſengers to town for ſuch things as were neceſſary for it. Howard yet lingered in the room; he looked for a few moments irreſolute: at laſt he approached Matilda.

"To an awful ſcene," exclaimed he, "you have been witneſs! a ſcene which will leave an indelible impreſſion of regret upon my mind. Her diſaſtrous fate has obliterated every trace of injury and reſentment. I think upon her now only as the Julia I wedded with affection. I mourn with bitterneſs her dreadful and untimely death—awful is the leſſon it inculcates of the precarioufneſs of life:—in the career

of

of youth, the elevation of hope and beauty, ſhe periſhed. Unhappy Julia!—a thouſand ſhocking reflexions ruſh upon my mind: Ah! how few, like Matilda are prepared for every caſualty. But why, (reſumed he, after a pauſe) why do you continue with an object ſo affecting? Ah! let not that gentle heart be rent with witneſſing calamities it cannot remedy: haſten my lovely, my ineſtimable friend, haſten from this abode of ſorrow: may your's ever be the abode of peace and cheerfulneſs! Oh! pure and permanent as your virtues, may your happineſs be!"

"Farewell, Howard!" cried Matilda, as ſhe roſe to depart, "I ſhould conſider myſelf ungrateful, if I did not ſay the knowledge of your welfare would ever yield me pleaſure."

She then paſſed him, and returned to the Caſtle, where her full heart vented its grief

in

in tears: ſhe ſeemed to forget every thing but Howard's laſt words—his deſpairing looks were preſent to her imagination; and, ſinking beneath mental dejection and bodily fatigue, ſhe felt weary of life, and could that moment with pleaſure have reſigned it, if aſſured, like Julia, ſhe ſhould have been tenderly mourned.

Lucy, diſtreſſed by her ſituation, vehemently intreated her to recollect herſelf, and recal her fortitude. Her words forcibly operated on Matilda, who, aſhamed of the weakneſs ſhe betrayed, dried up her tears, and endeavoured to throw off all appearance of languor.

She now recollected her intention of ſending for Hartland, and was calling a meſſenger for that purpoſe, when he made his unexpected appearance. On his way to the Caſtle, he had heard a rumour of the ſhipwreck,

ſhipwreck, and entered the parlour, juſt to ſee Matilda before he went out to gather the particulars of it. "So," ſaid he, the moment he entered, "I ſuppoſe by your eyes you have been on the beach: I really am ſurpriſed you would allow your curioſity to lead you thither, when you knew you could do no good."

"It was, indeed, a dreadful cataſtrope!" replied Matilda; "and one which, notwithſtanding the happy revolution it may lead to in my ſituation, I ſhall never be able to think of without horror."

Hartland, with much ſurpriſe in his looks, deſired her to explain her meaning.—This ſhe accordingly did, in as conciſe a manner as poſſible; and ended with entreating him to repair directly to Bromley.—"If what you have told me be true," cried Hartland, "I ſhall indeed, be the happieſt

of

of men; to think I can again eſteem the object I ſtill moſt ardently love, will be bliſs beyond language to expreſs!" Full of impatience, he hurried away; and Lucy, coming from an inner apartment, was briefly informed of Bromley's deſigns upon Matilda, and Howard's ſtory. They waited Hartland's return in anxious hope, and trembling expectation: he at laſt appeared in the court, and Lucy retired from the room: flying in, he rapturouſly embraced Matilda—implored her pardon a hundred times for the uneaſineſs he had given her. Bromley had ſaid every thing which could clear her fame—and the reſidue of his life, he declared, ſhould be ſpent in making her reparation for his unjuſt ſuſpicions.

Matilda readily accorded her forgiveneſs, and felt a degree of pleaſure at being reinſtated in the good opinion of the man ſhe

was

was bound to pleaſe. He ſpoke of the fate of Julia with horror, and, freed from the ſhadow of jealouſy, did not now heſitate to mention the name of Howard, on whom he beſtowed all the eulogiums he merited, declaring he ſhould be happy to render him every attention in his power; and added, he meant to order the moſt reſpectable of his tenants to be in readineſs to attend the funeral the enſuing evening, if agreeable to Mr. Howard.

Matilda wiſhed to change the ſubject.—She had obtained Lucy's permiſſion to acquaint him with her retreat, as there was ſo great a probability of his being now a conſtant reſident at the Caſtle: ſhe therefore, in a conciſe manner, informed him of their accidental meeting, and the mutual progreſs of their friendſhip. He heard her with pleaſure, delighted at the idea of having

having diſcovered a perſon, about whoſe fate Aſhmore had ſuffered ſo much anxiety, and deſired Lucy might immediately be introduced to him: ſhe was accordingly brought in. There was a prepoſſeſſing charm in her looks which won eſteem at firſt ſight, and Hartland felt and expreſſed the utmoſt intereſt about her welfare. The principles of Bromley, he imagined, had received a total change ſince his late eſcape; and the preſent time he thought propitious for having juſtice done to the injured Lucy. In the courſe of the day, he made known his thoughts, and the intentions they had given riſe to:—theſe intentions were warmly oppoſed by Lucy, who declared the baſeneſs and cruelty of Bromley's conduct had converted the predilection ſhe once felt for him, into feelings little ſhort of abhorrence. Hartland, however, would not

not relinqniſh them, and by his arguments and the aſſurances he gave her, that her union with Bromley would be a means of reſtoring Aſhmore to happineſs, whoſe ſufferings on her account he painted in the ſtrongeſt colours, he at length prevailed on her to promiſe to be guided by him. Ardent in whatever he undertook, he ſet off in the evening to Bromley, whom he found much better. He ſoon explained the motive which had induced him to re-viſit him ſo ſpeedily. "To prove your penitence ſincere, Mr. Bromley," ſaid he, "you muſt endeavour to do juſtice to all whom you have injured; amongſt the number, your memory, or rather your conſcience, I think, can ſcarcely fail of pointing out the amiable and lovely Lucy Woodville, as the greateſt ſufferer. I am happy to inform you, it is in your power to make her immediate repa-

ration

ration for your conduct towards her, as ſhe is now under my protection, in this neighbourhood—that reparation, which honour, feeling, humanity, all call aloud for: except you make it, be aſſured you can never hope to ſatisfy your own heart, nor the world; which, however depraved or diſſipated it may be, ſtill looks with contempt and abhorrence upon the ſeducer of female innocence.

Bromley, whoſe penitentials had been wearing off as his ſtrength returned, felt little inclination to comply with the wiſhes of Mr. Hartland. He ſtood too much in awe of him, however, to declare his repugnance to them, particularly as the candid confeſſion he had made, and now regretted, put him ſo much in his power. After a ſhort pauſe, therefore, he declared he was happy to have an opportunity of obeying the

the laws of honour. Hartland, much pleaſed at this aſſertion, expatiated on the delight he would derive from doing ſo; and was proceeding to ſettle the preliminaries of his marriage, when Bromley, in a faint voice, intreated him to defer the preſent ſubject, till the enſuing morning, declaring he felt himſelf ſtill too languid to be able to ſupport a longer converſation. Hartland believing this to be really the caſe, ſo well did he counterfeit languor and fatigue, directly roſe to depart, deſiring him, at the ſame time, to command whatever he thought could be of ſervice to him, at the Caſtle.—The moment he withdrew, Bromley, half diſtracted, ſummoned Le Rogne, who had been taken up by the fiſhermen who preſerved his maſter, to conſult with him upon the preſent emergency; as the idea of marrying, eſpecially a woman for whom he had

no

no inclination, and who had neither fortune nor conſequence to recommend her, was inſupportable to him. After ſome converſation, it was agreed a peaſant, bribed to ſilence, ſhould be ſent to town to engage a carriage; in which, they reſolved to depart at midnight, poſt on to the metropolis, and from thence embark for England. This plan was actually executed, and the travellers far on their way, before any intimation of their flight reached the Caſtle.—Lucy could not regret it; but Hartland vowed vengeance againſt Bromley, if ever they met again, provoked to think he had ſuffered himſelf to be the dupe of his artifices.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

" Her head reclin'd, as hiding grief from view,
" Droops like a roſe, ſurcharg'd with morning dew."

DRYDEN.

THE church-yard, where the remains of the once lovely and erring Julia were to be interred, was within view of the Caſtle; a melancholy ſpot, as the church had long been gone to decay, and was now the haunt of

" The boding bird,
" Which haunts the ruin'd piles and hallow'd urns,
" And beats about the tombs with nightly wings."

The

The funeral proceſſion did not begin till the cloſe of the evening—the gloomineſs of the hour was increaſed by a heavy ſky, and a ſoaking rain, which rendered the appearance of the country ſtill more cheerleſs than it naturally was.—Howard, anxious to avoid any thing like parade or oſtentation, declined having any other perſons at the funeral than thoſe whoſe attendance was abſolutely neceſſary. Hartland, however, deſirous of making ſome atonement for his former rudeneſs to him, by now ſhowing him every mark of reſpect in his power, joined the few attendants; and Matilda, prompted by an impulſe ſhe could not reſiſt, aſcended to a window in the ſide of the Caſtle, accompanied by Lucy, from whence ſhe could have a view of the melancholy ceremony. The church-yard was cleared ſoon after it was over; but Matilda ſtill lingered at the window,

window, and in a few minutes beheld a man returning to the dreary ſpot, who with ſlow ſteps approached the new-made grave, which was beneath the ſhelter of the only tree that grew in the place: with folded hands he leaned over it, and ſeemed loſt in dejection. That this was Howard, Matilda could not doubt, and her tears involuntarily ſtreamed at the idea of thoſe ſhe was convinced he was now ſhedding over the grave of his wife. "Unhappy Howard!" ſhe cried, "the conſtant prey of ſorrow and deſpair! Oh, God!" ſhe continued, with folded hands, and in the moſt energetic manner, "look down with compaſſion on him! diffuſe peace and comfort through his wounded heart! and in the grave of her who cauſed his anguiſh, let that anguiſh now be buried!"

Lucy, alarmed by ſeeing her ſo affected, earneſtly beſought her to remove from the

window; Matilda, however, ſtill leaned againſt it—her ſtreaming eyes directed to the ſpot where Howard ſtood. Lucy then hinted to her the probability there was of Hartland's being returned, well aware, that to remind her of her duty was to re-call her to it.

At his name, Matilda ſtarted, and turning from the window with a lingering look, haſtily wiped away her tears, and deſcended to the parlour, where ſhe found him. She tried to exert her ſpirits; but the late ſhocks they had received, could not eaſily be overcome, nor could Howard, mourning over the grave of Julia, an image but too much calculated to depreſs them, be quickly eraſed from her mind.

Hartland informed her, he had requeſted Howard to return with him to the Caſtle, and take up his abode there that night: this

this, however, he positively declined doing. —" He appears, at present, overwhelmed with melancholy (continued Hartland); but time and change of scene will, I hope and believe, dispel it by degrees. He informed me his regiment was on the point of marching to Cork, to embark for the West Indies. I asked him whether he would not come to take leave of you; he said he was almost certain it would not be in his power to do so, and charged me, therefore, with his farewell compliments to you and Mr. Belmore.

Matilda's heart swelled with an involuntary sigh at this intelligence. She endeavoured, however, to conquer the emotions it had caused, and rejoiced that the delicacy of Howard (for to this motive she attributed his declining the invitation of Hartland), had saved her from the confusion and

pain which ſhe was confident would have attended a formal meeting between them.

Hartland, anxious to atone for his former unkindneſs to her, redoubled his attentions, and watched her looks with a tenderneſs and ſolicitude, which awakened her gratitude, and ſtrenghened her efforts to promote his happineſs. Certain, the moſt effectual method he could take for the reſtoration of her ſpirits, would be to let her ſee Belmore, in the courſe of the evening he propoſed their returning without delay to England, and viſiting his cottage.

This, as he naturally concluded it would be, was a propoſal received with delight. The pleaſure it diffuſed through the heart of Matilda, was increaſed by obtaining a promiſe from Lucy, not only to accompany her to England, but in future to reſide with her; a promiſe, however, which Lucy would

would not give, till ſhe had received a ſolemn aſſurance from both Hartland and Matilda, that they would never deſire her to enter into company; though they declared ſhe might do ſo, without any fear of having her feelings hurt, as her unhappy ſtory was known but to few, and thoſe few, ſuch as either from friendſhip for her, or conſideration for themſelves, would not wiſh to diſcloſe it.

Preparations were immediately made for their departure; and in two days after the interment of Julia, they commenced their journey to Dublin, in order to embark from thence to Holyhead; this paſſage being not only ſhorter, but ſafer than the one they had before come. Matilda was followed many miles by the bleſſings of thoſe whom ſhe had preſerved from periſhing, and to whom

ſhe had ſecured the means of comfort after ſhe was gone.

Her impatience to ſee Mr. Belmore prevented her from taking more than a tranſient view of the Iriſh metropolis, but with that view ſhe was much pleaſed. They had a ſhort and ſafe voyage; and in the courſe of the fourth day after their landing, Matilda found herſelf in the arms of Belmore. From the hour of her departure from the kingdom, peace had been a ſtranger to him; he inceſſantly mourned her abſence, but ſtill more the idea of her infelicity, and his health gradually declined from his feelings:—her unexpected reſtoration, however, promiſed a renovation of health, as well as happineſs.—"Darling of my age!" exclaimed he, as he claſped her to his heart, "Heaven has reſtored you to my prayers: I ſee you before I die, and I

am

am bleſſed." "Yes," ſaid Hartland, "ſhe returns to render you, as ſhe has done me, completely happy." The various incidents which had occurred ſince their ſeparation, were related, as ſoon as their agitation had a little ſubſided. He wept at the ſufferings of her he called his child, while his heart glowed with exultation at her virtuous triumph over her enemies. On being informed who Lucy was, he embraced her with a joy ſcarcely inferior to that he had diſplayed on preſſing Matilda to his boſom. Anxious to communicate the glad tidings of returning felicity to Aſhmore, he ſent to requeſt his immediate preſence. The good old man obeyed the ſummons, and beheld with tears of rapture Hartland and Matilda in poſſeſſion, to all appearance, of that happineſs he ſo ſincerely wiſhed them.

At his approach, Lucy was conducted into an inner room, till he was prepared for

her reception. When by degrees they informed him ſhe was found,—that the lovely fugitive he had ſo long lamented, at that moment was waiting to receive his pardon and embrace, he nearly ſunk beneath his feelings, and with difficulty could deſire her to be brought to him. She was led to him by Hartland, not leſs affected than he was himſelf:—ſhe knelt before him, and implored him to forgive, if poſſible, the pain ſhe had cauſed him. He raiſed her up, and, in words ſcarcely audible, granted the pardon ſhe implored, and welcomed her return.

Tranquillity and pleaſure again took up their abode at the cottage of Belmore: all the party aſſembled at it ſeemed cheerful and eaſy; whether ſo in reality, is not for us to aſcertain.

It was agreed that the baſe Patty ſhould be treated with the ſilent ſcorn ſhe merited; but

but Aſhmore, with chriſtian-like zeal, declared he would admoniſh her of the horrid part ſhe had acted. She at firſt denied the juſtice of his accuſation; but finding the evidence of her guilt too ſtrong to admit of her clearing herſelf, ſhe made a merit of neceſſity, and candidly confeſſed it, endeavouring, however, as much as poſſible, to extenuate her conduct, by exaggerating the artifices Bromley had uſed to draw her in, to act in the manner ſhe had done. Nothing ſhe could ſay, however, could excuſe her in the opinion of Aſhmore; and with more ſeverity than he had ever before ſpoken, he bade her confine herſelf at home and repent. Her father hearing ſhe had diſobliged the Hartland's, treated her with unuſual rigour; ſo, growing deſperate, ſhe made overtures to a young farmer ſhe had before diſdained; and in conſequence of a

tolerable fortune given her by her father, he married her; and being both reſolute and moroſe, puniſhed her moſt amply for all her former miſconduct.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

" For over all men hangs a doubtful fate,
" One gains by what another is bereft;
" The frugal deſtinies have only left
" A common bank of happineſs below,
" Maintain'd, like nature, by an ebb and flow."

HOWARD'S INDIAN QUEEN.

AFTER a reſidence of two months with Belmore, Mr. and Mrs. Hartland, accompanied by him and Lucy, proceeded to the Lodge, where they were received with every demonſtration of joy by their domeſtics, and viſited and welcomed home by all their

neighbours. Lucy, as had previouſly been promiſed, was left free to act, and perſiſted in her reſolution of not going into company. —They continued at the Lodge the remainder of the winter; and early in the ſpring paid a viſit to London (ſtill accompanied by Belmore and Miſs Woodville), where they partook of all the faſhionable amuſements and gaieties of the place.

Change of ſcene, and variety of objects, but ſtill more the conſciouſneſs of acting right, by endeavouring to ſuppreſs the remembrance of Howard, diſſipated by degrees the melancholy of Matilda's mind; and the tender attentions of Hartland, revived every tender ſentiment ſhe had ever felt for him.

After a ſtay of a few weeks in London, ſhe and Mr. Hartland, with their two companions, went upon a long-projected tour through

through the kingdom, with which they were highly delighted. The autumn was far advanced ere they returned to the Lodge, where they meant to reſide in general—Matilda, to the great ſatisfaction of Mr. Hartland, who was ſated with diſſipation, preferring the calm and rational pleaſures of the country, to the tumultuous and fatiguing ones of the town.

Mr. Belmore was prevailed upon to reſide almoſt conſtantly with them; they ſeldom let him viſit his cottage without accompanying him. Lucy, on theſe occaſions, was always of their party, her uncle not deriving greater pleaſure from ſeeing her, than ſhe did from ſeeing him; ſo great indeed was her attachment to him, that could ſhe have hoped to eſcape obſervation as well in his ſmall family, as in the more numerous family of Mr. Hartland, ſhe would,

would, notwithſtanding her affection for Matilda, have gone without heſitation to reſide with him.

About a year after her departure from Ireland, ſhe heard of Bromley's ſudden death. It was occaſioned by the overturning of his phaëton: he died unpitied—and unlamented!

"No friend's complaint, no kind domeſtic tear,
"Pleas'd his pale ghoſt, nor grac'd his mournful bier."

His death was ſpeedily followed by the return of Aſhmore's ſon, fraught with the pleaſing hope of being now able to prevail on his beloved Lucy to reward his long-tried conſtancy. For ſome time ſhe withſtood all his ſolicitations; but at length the arguments of her friends conquered her too ſcrupulous delicacy, which alone made her reluctant to their union, and with her hand ſhe beſtowed upon him a heart

rich

rich in every virtue, and which had long learned to appreciate his worth. They were married at the Lodge, and immediately after the ceremony ſet out for the Parſonage (accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Hartland and Belmore), where they were in future to reſide; as Henry, who, previous to his departure from the kingdom, had taken orders, was appointed his father's curate, and the reverſion of the living ſecured to him, by the intereſt of Hartland. But Hartland's friendſhip did not ſtop here; both he and Matilda made ſeveral valuable and uſeful preſents to the young couple, and continued, from time to time, to give ſubſtantial proofs of their regard for them. Thus, by diſpenſing good, by trying to increaſe the happineſs of others, promoting their own, they enjoyed indeed as much felicity as is generally experienced.

But

But, alas! ſublunary bliſs is tranſient and uncertain! our joys, indeed, may well be reckoned fugitive and deceitful; for, like the glittering dew drops that bedeck the flowers of the field, they often appear brighteſt to our view at the moment they are about vaniſhing from us for ever.

A few months after the nuptials of Henry and Lucy, the health of Hartland, their generous friend and patron, began viſibly to decline. In vain he tried the medicinal waters of Briſtol. He daily grew worſe; and, after reſiding a few weeks there, felt ſo convinced that the bleſſing he ſought there would never more return to him, that he inſiſted on being removed to the Lodge, anxious to prepare for the awful hour he ſaw rapidly approaching, and enjoy, without interruption, the ſociety of his friends. Belmore, who had accompanied him to the

Hot

Hot Wells, returned with him from thence; and as ſoon as he arrived at the Lodge, a ſummons was diſpatched for Aſhmore and his children, which they immediately obeyed, penetrated with ſorrow for the melancholy cauſe of it.

The moſt acute grief ſwelled the heart of Matilda, at this affecting juncture. Her attentions were tender and unremitting; neither fatigue nor ſolicitation could prevail on her to reſign her huſband to the care of any other perſon.

Hartland was truly grateful for her aſſiduous tenderneſs, and at once pained and pleaſed by her affliction. 'Twas ſoothing to his heart to think he ſhould be regretted by her whom his ſoul adored—that he ſhould live in her remembrance long after the cold tomb had hid him from her view. Oh! who that poſſeſſes ſenſibility would

not

not have felt as he did?—who, that has feeling, muſt not derive a melancholy pleaſure from the idea of being remembered with tender regret by thoſe they love?

He ſurvived but a fortnight after his return to the Lodge: during this fortnight he arranged all his worldly affairs, and endeavoured to reconcile his friends, as he had done himſelf, to the approaching event.

Long as his death had been expected; yet when it did take place, it appeared ſudden. As he was repoſing one morning upon a couch, chatting with more than uſual cheerfulneſs, with his ſurrounding friends, his countenance ſuddenly altered, and catching the hand of Matilda, he drew her to him.

"All! all!" ſaid he with difficulty, "in a few moments will be over!—Oh! God!" he continued, "bleſs! bleſs my wife!

wife! Reward her for her virtues, by years of happineſs in this world! I know, my Matilda," he cried, looking up in her pale face, "I know that every proper reſpect will be paid to my memory—but more I do not deſire—I am not ſelfiſh:—no, Matilda, your Hartland is cheered at this awful moment by the idea of your future felicity. If departed beings are ere permitted to review the tranſactions of this world, he will look down with delight upon"—— Here convulſive ſpaſms ſeized him—his voice failed;—he drew Matilda ſtill cloſer to him, and leaning his head upon her boſom, expired!

Matilda fainted ere ſhe was diſengaged from his graſp, and in a ſtate of inſenſibility was borne to her chamber. When ſhe recovered, the tenderneſs of Belmore, and the unremitting ſolicitude of her other friends, ſomewhat

ſomewhat abated her grief, and calmed the perturbation of her ſpirits.

The Lodge was intailed; but the Iriſh eſtate was in Hartland's power. This he he left to Matilda to diſpoſe of as ſhe pleaſed; and, added to her jointure, it rendered her income a very affluent one.

As ſoon as the laſt duties were paid to the remains of her huſband, Matilda bid a laſt farewell to the Lodge, and removed to the Hamlet, where ſhe meant in future to reſide.

By her deſire Belmore added conſiderably to his farm, and took a long leaſe of the whole concern. Various alterations in the cottage, and additions to it, were then planned and executed under her direction, as were ſeveral improvements in the grounds; and in the courſe of a few months ſhe rendered it altogether a moſt beautiful and elegant retreat.

But

But neither the amuſement ſhe derived from beholding the gradual execution of her plans, nor the delight ſhe experienced from the ſociety of her friends, and the power which ſhe poſſeſſed and moſt amply exerciſed of doing good, could diſpel the melancholy which pervaded her mind; a melancholy which originated from the involuntary revival of long-baniſhed remembrances. A conſtant reſident in a place where ſhe had paſſed ſo many hours with Howard—where almoſt every ſpot reminded her of ſome word or look of his: his idea gradually regained its former aſcendancy over her; but inſtead of affording her pleaſure, it tortured and afflicted her, in conſequence of her ignorance of his fate.—From the time ſhe had left Ireland, ſhe had never heard of him; ſhe knew at that period he was on the point of embarking to a climate

climate hoſtile to the conſtitution, and ſhe naturally feared he was no more. The emotions ſhe betrayed whenever he was mentioned (which was now often the caſe) left Mr. Belmore no room to doubt the cauſe of her uneaſineſs. He would not, however, run the riſk of wounding the delicacy of her feelings by pretending to know it; but anxious to reſtore her to cheerfulneſs, he made ſeveral inquiries concerning Howard, with whom, in conſequence of Howard's expreſſing no wiſh for it, he had never kept up a correſpondence. The reſult of theſe inquiries was moſt unſatisfactory and alarming; all the information the agent in London, to whom they were addreſſed, could give reſpecting Howard was, that he had left the regiment entirely, a few months after it arrived in the Weſt Indies.

From

From this intelligence, Belmore concluded he had relapſed into that gloom and deſpair he had with ſuch difficulty rouſed him from; and that, more than ever diſguſted with life, and conſequently averſe to ſociety, from his hopeleſs paſſion for Matilda, he had ſought "a ſolitude forlorn" to end his days in.

This idea, the juſtneſs of which reflexion confirmed, he reſolved, in the courſe of time, to diſcloſe to Matilda; well convinced that, to a feeling heart like hers, no certainty almoſt could be ſo painful as the anxiety inſeparable from a ſtate of ſuſpenſe. When once ſhe had reaſon to think Howard loſt to her, he truſted, from her good ſenſe, ſhe would exert herſelf to baniſh unavailing regrets, and recover tranquillity; and be led, perhaps, to think of ſome other object equally amiable, and calculated to render her happy.

A year, however, nearly elapſed ere he found a convenient opportunity for putting this reſolution into practice. At length, as he and Matilda were walking one evening in the garden, their converſation turned on paſt events, which naturally led to the mention of Howard. "Unhappy man!" cried Belmore, after a momentary pauſe, "I much fear you have entailed miſery upon yourſelf."

He then related to Matilda what he had heard concerning him, and the conjectures and apprehenſions it had excited.

Matilda's diſtreſs at this intelligence was even greater than he believed it would be; her boſom heaved with convulſive ſighs, and her cheeks were bedewed with tears.

Confident, however, that he ſhould rather aggravate than leſſen it, by attempting to ſoothe, or even ſeeming to obſerve it, he formed a pretext for leaving her.

Un-

"Unhappy Howard!" ſaid Matilda, repeating the words of Belmore, when left to herſelf—"Afflicting as would have been the knowledge of thy death, I think I could have borne it better than the idea of thy living, in lingering miſery. Oh, Howard! vain are any hopes that are entertained of my recovering tranquillity, while ſuch an idea pervades my boſom!"

She quitted the garden, and directed her ſteps to the ruined Abbey, a favourite haunt whenever ſhe thought ſhe was unobſerved. Here ſhe often ſoothed her fancy by thinking ſhe retraced the ſteps of Howard;—here ſhe loved to awaken thoſe ſolemn echoes with his name, which, ſhe believed, had often returned her own to his fond ear.

Her tears flowed with increaſed violence on entering this ſolitary ruin; and throwing herſelf on a little bench near the entrance

of the chapel, where ſhe knew Howard was wont to ſit and contemplate her dwelling, ſhe continued to indulge her ſadneſs, till the laſt ſtreaks of light faded from the weſt, and the ſhadows of night began to caſt a fearful gloom around the building, which chilled her to the ſoul and quickened her return home.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

——— "When thou deign'ſt to ſue,
"Can I thy ſuit withſtand?
"When thou, lov'd youth, haſt won my heart,
"Can I refuſe my hand?"

THE next morning, as Mr. Belmore and Matilda were ſeated at breakfaſt by an open window, feſtooned with honey-ſuckle, and commanding an extenſive view of a romantic and beautifully diverſified country, now glowing with the luxuriance of

ſummer, and well calculated to enliven a mind not ſaddened by deſpair, they beheld Mrs. Aſhmore tripping along the road with a lightneſs in her air which betokened a heart at eaſe.

She almoſt flew acroſs the little bridge and lawn before the houſe, and entered the parlour, half breathleſs from the haſte ſhe had made—"Upon my word, fair lady," ſaid Belmore, as he drew a chair to the table for her, "this ſunſhiny countenance of yours is enough to gladden one's heart."

"Well," replied ſhe, as ſhe ſeated herſelf, "if my countenance pleaſes you, ſo I hope will my news; but come, my dear Mrs. Hartland, you muſt give me a cup of tea to waſh away the duſt of the road, before I begin my goſſip."

"And pray, what is this goſſip, or wonderful news you have collected?" aſked Belmore.

"Nothing,

"Nothing, more or leſs," replied ſhe, "than that a rumour prevails throughout the neighbourhood of an apparition having been ſeen at the Abbey."

Matilda felt ſomewhat diſcompoſed at theſe words, which were delivered in a ſerious voice, as ſhe concluded the report Mrs. Aſhmore alluded to, originated from her having been ſeen the preceding night by ſome of the ignorant and ſuperſtitious ruſtics, wandering about the ruins, and conſequently, that ſhe muſt forbear viſiting them again.

"And pray," reſumed Belmore, ſmiling, "when was this ſpirit ſeen?"

"This morning," ſaid Mrs. Aſhmore.

"Really!" cried he. "Why this muſt be ſome pleaſant ſpirit thus to prefer the radiance of the ſun to the glimpſes of the moon: and pray, what ſhape did it aſſume?"

"Not a very terrifying one," replied Mrs. Aſhmore, and glanced at Matilda; "but whether its 'intents are wicked or charitable,' time only can determine."

Matilda now became violently agitated, nor was Belmore unmoved. Mrs. Aſhmore perceived the hopes and expectations her words, but ſtill more her looks had given riſe to; and, having prepared her friends for agreeable tidings, haſtened to communicate them.

"Henry went out upon a ramble very early this morning," ſaid ſhe. "As he was paſſing the Abbey, in his way back, he ſaw a young man wandering about it, whoſe perſon, but ſtill more whoſe melancholy air accorded ſo perfectly with the deſcription he had received of Howard, that he inſtantly concluded it was him. Anxious to know whether he was right in this

this conjecture, he proceeded to the village, where he believed he ſhould obtain the information he required: he was not miſtaken in thinking ſo. A very handſome curricle ſtood before the inn; and on inquiring to whom it belonged, the landlord replied, to Mr. Howard, who had formerly reſided in the old Abbey, and been the wonder of all the neighbourhood, from his ſtrange manner of living. This was enough for Henry; he directly flew to inform me of what he had heard; and I inſtantly quitted the breakfaſt-table, where he was ſeated with his father, and poſted hither to prepare you for a viſit which I am ſure you will ſoon receive."

She had ſcarcely finiſhed her little narrative, ere Henry and his father made their appearance, eager to congratulate Belmore and Matilda on the ſafety of Howard, about

which they knew they had both ſuffered great anxiety. Their ſteps were followed by a ſervant in a handſome livery, who inquired for Mr. Belmore, and begged to know whether he was ſufficiently at leiſure at preſent to receive a viſit from a particular friend. Mr. Belmore anſwered in the affirmative, and the ſervant haſtened away. Ere they thought he could have reached the inn, his maſter was within ſight of the cottage.

He walked with precipitation till he came to the little bridge; there he pauſed as if detained by the powerful recollection of paſt events, which it revived in his mind. It was there he had met Matilda and preſſed her to accompany him in a morning walk, in the courſe of which he explained to her the wretchedneſs of his ſituation;—it was there he beheld the anguiſh that expla-

explanation gave her;—it was there he had parted from her, and almoſt confeſſed ſhe was the deareſt being on earth to him.

Matilda could not help believing theſe circumſtances had recurred to him. Her heart now began to throb with unuſual violence—ſhe became alternately pale and red, and would have retired from the room, but that ſhe thought by ſuch a meaſure ſhe ſhould betray the emotions ſhe felt.

Belmore hurried from the houſe to meet his welcome viſiter. The moment Howard beheld him, he flew forward, and ſeizing his extended hand, preſſed it between his, and in broken language declared the pleaſure this meeting gave him. Belmore, without giving him time to make any inquiries, led him into the parlour. His eyes glanced round the aſſembled party, and faſtened on the lovely face of Matilda, who, for obvious

reaſons had ſhrunk into the moſt remote corner of the room. His colour inſtantly changed, and he became motionleſs for a moment; then, as if ſuddenly recollecting himſelf, he bowed in a confuſed manner—made an inquiry after her health, in a voice that was ſcarcely articulate, and ſeating himſelf, endeavoured to enter into converſation.

Belmore gently reproached him for his ſilence.—"Be aſſured," ſaid Howard, "it proceeded neither from ingratitude nor forgetfulneſs; I would have written, could I have ſuppoſed my letters would have given you any pleaſure; but, as I knew they muſt be tranſcripts of my heart, that was impoſſible."

"They would, at leaſt, have relieved me from the painful anxiety I ſuffered on your account," replied Belmore—"an anxiety which

which induced me to inquire of the agent of the regiment to which you belonged, about you."

"And he informed you I had left it?" ſaid Howard. "He did."

"But he could not," reſumed Howard, "inform you of the cauſe of my doing ſo. I had not been many months in the Weſt Indies when I received a letter from a gentleman, by whoſe means I had, early in life, been left without any proviſion. My father poſſeſſed a handſome independence, which this man, who feigned himſelf his friend, found means to deprive him of, by leading him gradually into the vortex of diſſipation. Too late he became ſenſible of the artifices uſed for his deſtruction. Full of regret for the warmth of temper and credulity which had expoſed him to them, he died

of a broken heart in conſequence of their ſucceſs, ſincerely penitent for every error.

" His falſe friend purſued an uninterrupted courſe of folly and extravagance for many years. Some heavy family misfortunes then awakened reflexions which had long lain dormant, impreſſed him with horror for his nefarious conduct to my father, and rendered him anxious to make every poſſible atonement for it. To do this, he ſought me out, and earneſtly conjured me to reſign my commiſſion upon the receipt of his letter, and join him in the ſouth of France, where he was then lingering in the laſt ſtage of a conſumption, that he might have the pleaſure, ere he died of ſoliciting my forgiveneſs, for the injuries he had done me, and putting me into poſſeſſion of the property he had obtained, or rather deprived my father of

at

at the gaming table, to which alone he had led him.

"I complied with his requeſt, the more readily, as the ſociety I was obliged to mingle with in the army did not ſuit my preſent feelings.

"He lingered much longer than could have been expected from the weak ſtate I found him in. I accompanied his remains laſt week to England; and having paid a viſit to the ſeat of my anceſtors, ſo unexpectedly reſtored to me, I came hither for the purpoſe of ſeeing you, ere I again quitted the kingdom, in all probability for ever, to reſide in a ſweet and lonely retreat I ſecured in France."

"Quit the kindgdom for ever, to ſettle in France?" repeated Mr. Belmore. "Pray, may I aſk the cauſe of this reſolution? Have you formed new friendſhips—new attach-

attachments, more powerful than your old ones, to induce you thus to abandon your native country?—is your heart then entirely changed?"

"No," replied Howard, ſomewhat reproachfully and with rather an indignant look,—"No," cried he, faſtening his dark and expreſſive eyes upon Mr. Belmore, "it is not becauſe my heart is altered; but becauſe it is unchanged, that I exile myſelf from my native country."

"Well," replied Mr. Belmore, "you muſt certainly know beſt what is calculated to give you happineſs. I ſhall, therefore, uſe no argument to diſſuade you from your preſent plan. Since you aſſure me, however that your heart is unaltered, Mrs. Hartland and I may, perhaps, ſome time or other viſit your retreat."

"Mrs. Hartland and you!" cried Howard, ſtarting, as if a ſudden light flaſhed upon

upon his ſoul;—" Mrs. Hartland and you!" he exclaimed, alternately looking at them.

The tears of Matilda could no longer be ſuppreſſed. She haſtily roſe, quitted the room, waving her hand to Mrs. Aſhmore, who alſo roſe at the ſame moment, not to follow her.

Howard trembling beneath his emotions, ſtarted from his chair—beckoned to Mr. Belmore, and precipitately withdrew to the garden. Here Belmore did not keep him long in ſuſpenſe; he not only acquainted him with the ſituation of Matilda, but the ſtate of her heart; and a guſt of tears bedewed the manly cheeks of Howard at the ſudden proſpect of felicity which opened to his view. Notwithſtanding his ardent ſolicitations to be conducted directly to her, Belmore detained him till he appeared to have

have regained ſome compoſure; he then led him into the houſe, and having learned from Matilda's maid, that her miſtreſs was alone in the dreſſing-room, he introduced Howard into it, and immediately retired.

Howard ſprung forward, and threw himſelf at the feet of Matilda, who, at his approach, raiſed her head from the arm of the ſofa upon which ſhe was ſitting.

"Deareſt! lovelieſt of human beings!" he exclaimed as he preſſed her hands to his wildly throbbing heart; "This moment—this moment renders me the moſt bleſſed, or miſerable of men. Say, Matilda! (he continued, raiſing his humid eyes to hers) —ſay, may I indeed indulge the hopes Mr. Belmore has inſpired me with?"

The bright bluſh which mantled the cheeks of Matilda at theſe words, proved to him he might. A tacit acknowledgment

of

of his happineſs was not, however, ſufficient for the impetuous ſoul of Howard; nothing ſhort of hearing it from the lips of Matilda would ſatisfy him.

"Tell me," cried he, "can you, who ſo well know the numerous foibles, the waywardneſs of this heart? (preſſing ſtill more fervently to it the trembliug hand he held within his)—can you, I ſay, think it worthy of your acceptance?—ſpeak, deareſt Matilda—ſuſpenſe on ſuch a ſubject is not to be endured."

"Let my actions ſpeak for me," ſaid Matilda; "let my permitting you to ſpeak as you have done, inform you of what I feel and think."

"You will not then, heſitate" cried Howard, "to entruſt your future happineſs to my care?" "No," replied Matilda, "I will not."

The

The tranſports of Howard at theſe words, mock deſcription:—to receive from the woman he loved an unequivocal acknowledgment of her attachment to him;—to hold her whom he had ſo long deſpairingly adored in his arms, with every certainty of calling her in a few ſhort days his own, was tranſport! rapture! which can only be conceived by thoſe who have been in a ſimilar ſituation. They remained together, till ſummoned to dinner by Mr. Belmore, whoſe joy at the happy iſſue of their ſufferings was breathed from the very bottom of his heart. They found the Aſhmore's in the dinner-parlour, who, as they had ſympathiſed in their ſorrows, now participated in their happineſs.—Howard, who ſtill retained all his impetuoſity, would not quit Matilda at night, to take up his quarters at the village inn, till ſhe had promiſed

miſed to give him her hand that day week: the intermediate ſpace was filled up with arrangements for their future eſtabliſhment. As Howard's paternal manſion was in a ruinous condition, it was ſettled that they ſhould reſide at the Hamlet, to which they were both ſtrongly attached. The cottage, as I have already ſaid, was conſiderably enlarged and elegantly fitted up, and ſurrounded by a handſome domain, to which was united a rich and flouriſhing farm; ſo that no where, perhaps, could they have found a pleaſanter or more convenient habitation.

At length the happy day arrived for crowning the virtues of Matilda, by uniting her to an amiable man, who juſtly appreciated her worth.

On this auſpicious morn, ſhe roſe with the ſun, and accompanied by Belmore, Henry

Henry, and Lucy, proceeded to the village church, where Aſhmore and the enraptured Howard waited to receive her.

As ſoon as the ceremony was over, the whole party returned to the cottage, where a rural entertainment was prepared for them, and the day was ſpent in all the delights of mutual love and friendſhip.

From this period, the days of Howard and his Matilda have glided on like a ſmooth ſtream, calm and unruffled:—Their former ſorrows and inquietudes but heightened their ſucceeding happineſs, and ſtrengthened their confidence in that Heaven which ſupported them throughout them.

Bleſſed with a lovely family, they derive a never-failing pleaſure from their culture, while Belmore, in the brightneſs of his

evening

evening hour, finds himself amply recompensed for bearing with patience, the clouds which obscured his early prospects.

FINIS.

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